

# HISTORY *of* WAR



## HEAVY FIRE IN KOREA

BRIGADIER BRIAN PARRITT  
ON THE BATTLE OF THE HOOK

## THE CRIMEAN WAR

# EMPIRE'S SCARLET HEROES

Discover the hard fight of the Guards  
at the Alma, Sevastopol and Inkerman  
in their own words

**WIN**  
A TOUR  
OF FLEET AIR  
ARM'S SECRET  
PLANES

### PLUS:

- ✪ Serbia 1914
- ✪ Stuart Light Tank
- ✪ Army Recruitment

## WHY THE KAISER'S BATTLE FAILED

Inside the doomed 1918 offensive

### THE CAPTURE OF NEW ORLEANS

How the Union fleet beat  
Confederate defences



### SECRETS OF FIELD MEDICINE

Explore the origins of the  
Royal Army Nursing Corps



## HORROR OF THE BLITZ

BLAST SURVIVOR ON  
UK'S DARKEST HOUR





# KING & COUNTRY'S

**THE POLISH CAVALRY** can trace its origins back to medieval times and the days of mounted knights. Poland being mostly a country of flatlands and fields is and was particularly well-suited for mounted forces to operate in.

Over the centuries, its knights and horse cavalry evolved into many different types of mounted military formations. Among the most famous were the heavily armoured 'winged hussars' and their more lightly armed 'uhlans' or lancers.

## GERMANY ATTACKS!

ON SEPTEMBER 1, 1939, the German invasion of Poland began... At that time the cavalry made up just over 10% of the entire Polish Army. They were organized into 11 cavalry brigades, each composed of 3 or 4 mounted regiments together with attached artillery and armoured units.

These horsemen were regarded as the elite fighting formation of the army and were among the first to encounter the invading Germans.

During the short but bloody campaign there were countless battles and skirmishes between Polish cavalry units and the invaders... mostly fought on foot.

There were however no less than 16 confirmed cavalry charges which, contrary to common belief, were nearly always successful.



## KING & COUNTRY HEADQUARTERS

Suite 2301, 23rd Floor, No.3 Lockhart Road,  
Wanchai, Hong Kong  
Tel : (852) 2861 3450 Fax : (852) 2861 3806  
E-mail : sales@kingandcountry.com

## KING & COUNTRY SHOP

245, Pacific Place, 88 Queensway,  
Hong Kong  
Tel : (852) 2525 8603  
Website : www.kingandcountry.com

## KINGS X

206 Alamo Plaza, San Antonio, TX 78205, USA  
Tel : (210) 226 7000 Fax : (210) 226 7117  
E-mail : sales@kingsx.com  
Website : www.kingsx.com

# 'Long Live Poland!'

German/Polish border elements of the 18th Pomeranian Uhlan Regt. surprised a battalion of German infantry resting in some woods.

The Uhlans enthusiastically charged and the Germans fled in panic... Later it was also said that the Polish horsemen had attacked enemy armour with swords and lances... *Not quite true perhaps* but an almost mythic legend began which is still heard today... Even famed Nazi General Heinz Guderian believed the tale of

the gallant Polish Lancers taking on German tanks!

## K & C's POLISH LANCERS

Our latest mounted figures portray a group of Lancers charging at full gallop towards the enemy... As the officer raises his sabre menacingly his guidon bearer rides next to him with the national colours. A trumpeter is close by...

Elsewhere three other horsemen lower their lances as they prepare to close with their German foes. One unfortunate Lancer though has had his horse shot from under him!

7 figures will be released in 2 small groups (including a dismounted Lancer standing defiantly over his dead horse not shown here). All are available as single pieces and together make a dramatic and exciting vignette seldom seen in the world of toy soldiers!

## KING & COUNTRY

### AUTHENTIC HAND-MADE HISTORY

Available around the world wherever fine quality military miniatures are sold.

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# Welcome

**“We are in a very hell with nothing to be heard, save the humming of shells, the whiz of round-shot...”**

– Captain Charles Wilson, Coldstream Guards,  
Battle of the Alma

**O**n 20 September 1854 the first pitched battle of the Crimean War began. Despite being poorly supplied and receiving inadequate provisions on their disease-stricken march, the British expeditionary force proved decisive in the attack across the Alma River.

Among the waves of troops assaulting the Russian positions were men of the Guards Brigade, who months earlier had paraded before Queen Victoria prior to their gruelling journey east.

Although they were to fight ferociously and bravely on several occasions, earning several of them the newly established

Victoria Cross, the sick and wounded faced terrible conditions behind the lines and further challenges on their return home.



**Tim Williamson**  
Editor



**EMAIL**

timothy.williamson@futurenet.com

## CONTRIBUTORS



### TOM GARNER

This month Tom spoke with Brigadier Brian Parritt, CBE, who revealed his experiences as an artillery officer at the Battle of the Hook (page 36). He also spoke with Glennis Leatherdale about her life as a teenager in wartime London (page 76).



### PROF. WILLIAM PHILPOTT

William is Professor of the History of Warfare at King's College London, specialising in areas such as WWI strategy and modern naval history. Over on page 56 he begins a new mini-series of features on the 1918 German Spring Offensive.



### MARK SIMNER

Mark is an author and historian of British military history, focussing on 19th-century conflicts. Over on page 26 he presents the experiences of the Guards Brigade in the Crimean War and the challenges they faced on their return home.

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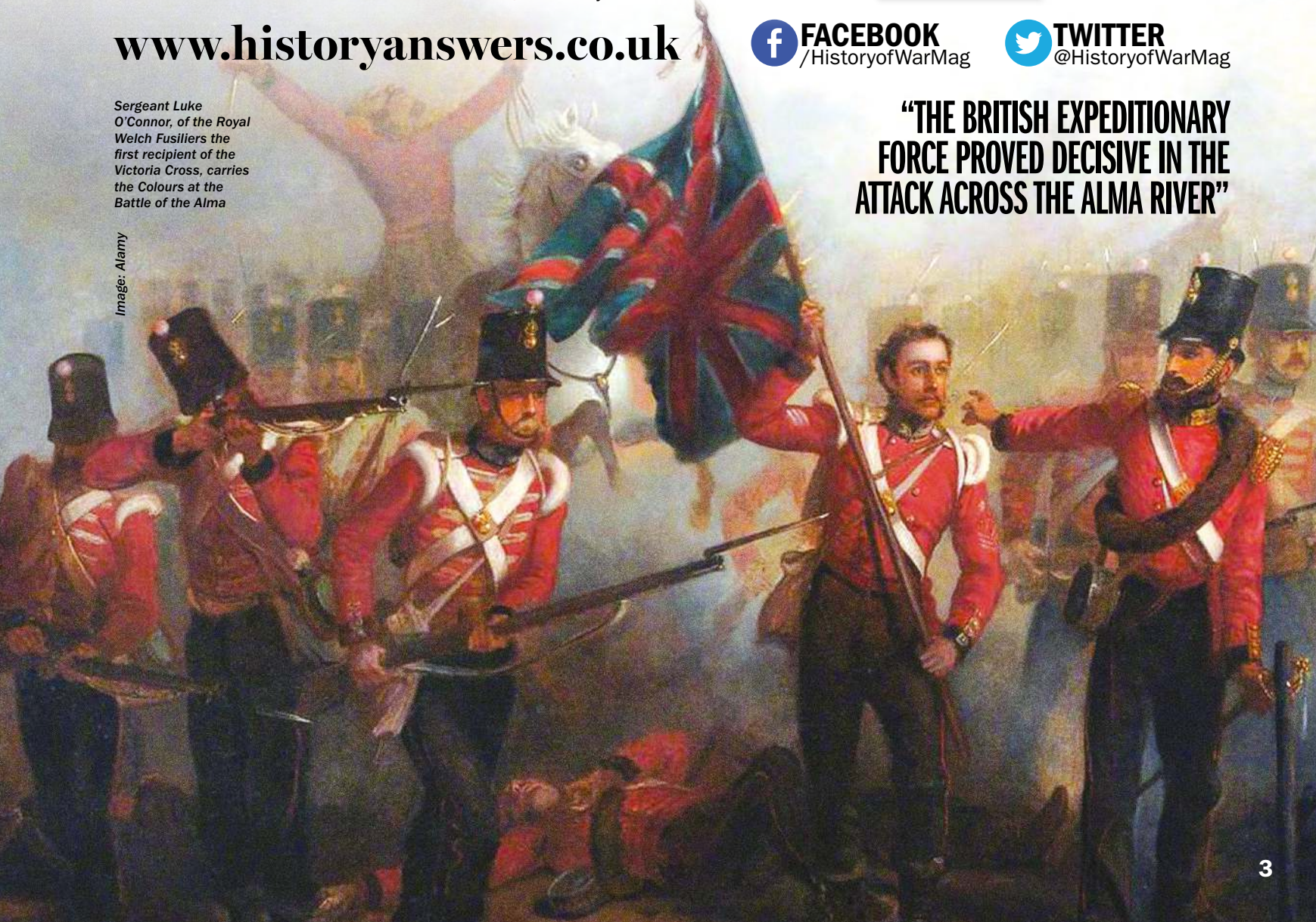
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Sergeant Luke O'Connor, of the Royal Welch Fusiliers the first recipient of the Victoria Cross, carries the Colours at the Battle of the Alma

Image: Alamy

**“THE BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE PROVED DECISIVE IN THE ATTACK ACROSS THE ALMA RIVER”**





# EMPIRE'S SCARLET HEROES

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For over a century, frontline care has been immensely improved and countless lives saved

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## M3 STUART

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## **WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS**

### **THUNDERBIRD IS GO**

*Taken: 12 September 1961*

Major general E.J.H Bates, director of the Royal Artillery, supervises a crew preparing a Thunderbird guided missile at Horseshoe Barracks, Essex, for departure to Germany. The missile was deployed to support the British Army of the Rhine as anti-aircraft defence against potential Soviet offensives. The Thunderbird was designed to target high-altitude targets, at a range of up to 50 kilometres (30 miles).











A large, weathered DC3 aircraft is shown from a low angle, partially buried in a thick layer of snow. The aircraft's fuselage is heavily damaged, with several windows missing and the structure exposed. The background shows a vast, flat, snow-covered landscape under a dark, starry sky, suggesting a remote, cold location. The overall mood is somber and historical.

# **WAR**<sub>in</sub> **FOCUS**

## **FROZEN LANDING**

A US Army DC3 basks in the midnight sun on the beach of Sólheimasandur, Iceland. The aircraft has remained in this same spot since November 1973, when its crew was forced to make a crash-landing. Although decades of weather have worn it down, much of the airframe can be identified, and is today a peculiar destination for tourists and aviation enthusiasts.





## **WAR**<sup>in</sup> **FOCUS**

### **RUSSIAN LIFE GUARDS AT THE BATTLE OF FÈRE-CHAMPENOIS**

*Painted: 1891*

On 25 March 1814 the French Empire was set to suffer yet another blow as forces of the Sixth Coalition continued their invasion and faced off against Marshals Marmont and Martier. Russian, Prussian, Austrian and Württemberg forces overwhelmed the French army, which was forced to withdraw. The battle took place just five days before Paris eventually fell, and Napoleon abdicated just over a week later.







# **WAR**<sub>in</sub> **FOCUS**

## **FIRE FROM THE RISING SUN**

*Taken: 24 August 2017*

A Type 74 tank takes part in a live-firing drill at Higashi Fuji training grounds in central Japan. The Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) took part in numerous drills alongside US forces, in response to heightened tensions with the North Korean regime.

Although Japan's constitution forbids the establishment of a 'combat' army for use in an offensive war, its Self-Defense Forces maintain air, ground and naval capabilities.









# TIMELINE OF... BRITISH ARMY NURSING

Organised nursing in the British Army developed in the late 19th century and came of age during the world wars

A nurse tends a soldier in a field hospital in South Africa during the Second Boer War

## BASICS IN THE BOER WARS

British nurses deploy to South Africa during the Second Boer War, and their experience reveals that further planning and organisation is necessary to ensure the proper care of British soldiers.

1854

## CRISIS IN CRIMEA

Florence Nightingale trains and leads 38 nurses to tend British sick and wounded during the Crimean War, the first mission of its kind outside the British Isles.



British nurses tend wounded and sick soldiers amid the difficult conditions at Scutari Hospital in Turkey during the Crimean War

1883

## ROYAL RED CROSS

To acknowledge heroism and sacrifice among British military nurses, the Royal Red Cross, often called the nursing equivalent of the Victoria Cross, is created with the support of Queen Victoria.

Members of the Royal Air Force Nursing Service after receiving the Royal Red Cross from the king in 1941



1899-1902  
1902

## ROYAL NURSING SERVICE

Royal warrant establishes Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS), the forerunner of the Royal Nursing Corps that also bears the queen's name, with the motto "Under the White Cross".

Queen Alexandra served as the first president of QAIMNS from its inception in 1902 until her death in 1925







**“EXPERIENCE REVEALS THAT FURTHER  
PLANNING AND ORGANISATION IS  
NECESSARY TO ENSURE THE PROPER  
CARE OF BRITISH SOLDIERS”**

## WORLD WAR II

British nurses are deployed around the world and serve in every theatre of the global conflict. Nurses suffer death, injury and capture during the course of the war. They adopt military dress and gain military ranks and insignia.

*A German remote flying bomb struck the hospital ship HMHS Newfoundland, killing six British nurses off the Italian coast in 1943*



The badge of the QARANC features the white cross of the flag of Denmark, emblematic of Queen Alexandra's home country

## QUEEN ALEXANDRA'S CORPS

Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps (QARANC) is formed. The corps remains the modern nursing branch of the British Army today and is one of the finest formations of its kind in the world.



1914-1918

1939-1945

1949

2003-2011

## THE GREAT WAR

A small contingent of 600 nurses of the QAIMNS swells to several thousand prior to the armistice, as casualties in World War I exceed any other conflict in history.

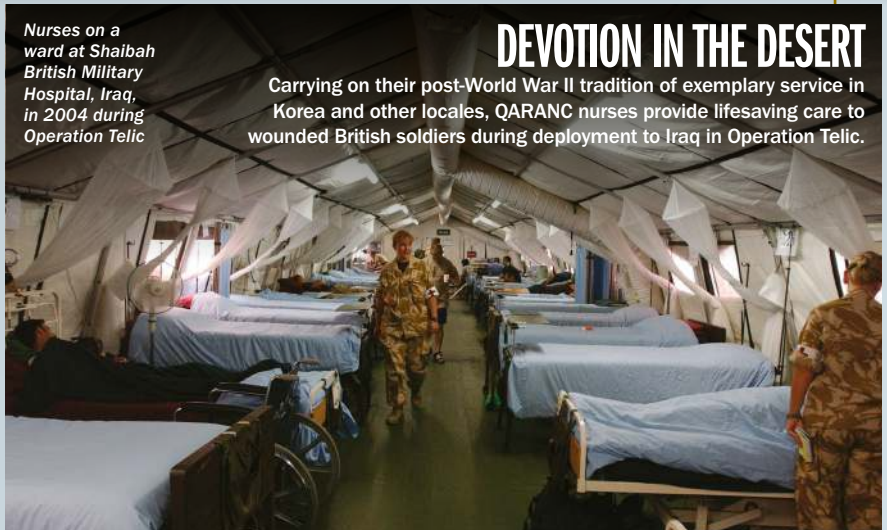
*British nurses arrive aboard ship at the French port city of Dieppe during the opening days of World War I*



*Nurses on a ward at Shaibah British Military Hospital, Iraq, in 2004 during Operation Telic*

## DEVOTION IN THE DESERT

Carrying on their post-World War II tradition of exemplary service in Korea and other locales, QARANC nurses provide lifesaving care to wounded British soldiers during deployment to Iraq in Operation Telic.



Images: Alamy, Getty



# THE ROYAL RED CROSS

Organisational nursing in the British Army and the Royal Red Cross – often considered the Victoria Cross of nursing – have grown in stature and prominence since the late 19th century

**W**hen Queen Victoria received word that nurses with the British Army had been wounded and some had lost their lives during the First Boer War of 1880-81, she was deeply moved. The nursing profession in the army was evolving at the time, and the queen believed that recognition for those who displayed tremendous courage and sacrifice in the care of sick and wounded soldiers was needed. She prevailed upon Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone to sponsor the creation of an appropriate decoration.

On St George's Day, 27 April 1883, the Royal Red Cross was established to acknowledge the exceptional service of its recipients engaged in the nursing profession. The medal was first awarded to Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing and heroine of the Crimean War, who had travelled east in the autumn of 1854 with 38 nurses she had personally trained to provide much needed care for sick and wounded soldiers. In 1917, at the height of World War I, a second-class award was instituted as well.

Although the nursing of wounded soldiers in Britain can be traced to the earliest conflicts in

**“THE TREMENDOUS BURDEN OF CARING FOR THE SICK AND WOUNDED IN SOUTH AFRICA LED TO FURTHER REFINEMENT OF THE NURSING EFFORT IN SUPPORT OF THE BRITISH ARMY”**

British history, in the beginning it was generally provided by fellow soldiers or concerned citizens who took casualties into their homes. While records confirm that hospitals were established during the English Civil War in the mid-17th century and civilians cared for the wounded following the campaign of King Charles II in Flanders in the late 1600s, appropriate nursing care for those in need did not truly formalise in the British military until the 19th century. During the Peninsular War and the Napoleonic Wars hospitals were established, and the positive outcomes, as some sick and wounded soldiers were able to eventually return to service, garnered the attention of senior officers.

Those nurses who accompanied Nightingale to the Crimea were not army personnel. However, they did constitute the first organised deployment of trained nurses in support of a military campaign outside the British Isles. Nurses continued to serve the army's needs during military deployments between the Crimean and Boer Wars. In 1881, a full 26 years after the Crimean foray, the Army Nursing Corps was formed. The establishment of the prestigious Royal Red Cross soon followed.

Practical experience revealed that a nursing shortage was a distinct possibility in future conflicts, and in 1897 Queen Victoria's third daughter, Princess Christian, established a nursing reserve corps that bore her name – Princess Christian's Army Nursing Service Reserve. Approximately 2,000

nurses served in the Boer Wars that followed from 1899-1902. The tremendous burden of caring for the sick and wounded in South Africa led to further refinement of the nursing effort in support of the British Army, in preparation for the inevitable conflicts that lay ahead. In 1902 Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS) was established. The wife of King Edward VII, Queen Alexandra was a member of the Danish royal family, and she chose as the service's emblem the white cross of the Danish national flag, along with the motto “Sub Cruce Candida” or “Under the White Cross”. A reserve formation followed six years later. Queen Alexandra served as the organisation's president until her death in 1925 and was succeeded by Queen Mary.

The QAIMNS and personnel of the Territorial Force Nursing Service and its successor, the Territorial Army Nursing Service, provided care for British Army casualties in every combat theatre of World War I and World War II. The service's rank of matron-in-chief was equivalent to the army rank of brigadier; chief principal matron was



**Left:** Queen Victoria, moved by the sacrifices of nurses in wartime, advocated the establishment of the Royal Red Cross





equivalent to a colonel; matron, major; senior sister, captain; sister, lieutenant; staff nurse had no army equivalent. Scores of the British Commonwealth nurses died in the world wars. A number of others were severely wounded or were held as prisoners during these conflicts.

In 1949 the QAIMNS was reconstituted as Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps (QARANC), which continues today. Corresponding nursing organisations have also been established within the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. In 1992 male nurses, formerly personnel of the Royal Army Medical Corps, were incorporated into the QARANC.

Since its inception, the Royal Red Cross has become symbolic of the selfless service of QARANC personnel and their predecessors. Dozens have been awarded – some to men and women serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

**Right:** The Royal Red Cross is the most prestigious decoration presented to members of Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps

**Below, left:** Lieutenant Colonel Andrea Lewis, the former commander of the hospital in Camp Bastion, Afghanistan, received her Royal Red Cross in 2013 from the Prince of Wales



Image: Alamy, Getty, TopFoto

**“SINCE ITS INCEPTION, THE ROYAL RED CROSS HAS BECOME SYMBOLIC OF THE SELFLESS SERVICE OF QARANC PERSONNEL”**



# BATTLEFIELD MEDICINE

Advances in medical treatment protocols and theatre facilities have enabled medical personnel to save more lives during conflict



Soldiers carry a wounded comrade through the mud in 1917 to the medical professionals behind the front line

**S**ince the earliest days of battlefield medicine, nursing professionals have utilised the latest available treatments and techniques to render the best possible care to critically wounded

patients. The evolution of such care has resulted in greater survivability as these nurses demonstrate their capabilities under conditions that remain difficult at best. QARANC nurses complete rigorous training to fulfil their collective mission.

**“THE EVOLUTION OF SUCH CARE HAS RESULTED IN GREATER SURVIVABILITY”**

## BATTLEFIELD LIFESAVING

Throughout the history of warfare soldiers often died of their wounds on the battlefield. For want of a simple tourniquet they bled to death, and traumatic amputation resulted in shock. There was little understanding among fellow soldiers who might attempt to render aid. But through

the introduction of medical personnel trained to perform life-saving treatments amid the rigours of combat, along with the development of battlefield medicine, the likelihood of a soldier dying on the battlefield due to an untreated wound has diminished significantly.

Greater understanding of infection control, the realisation that severed arteries must be closed to prevent a casualty from ‘bleeding out’, antibiotics, readily available blood plasma, sustaining fluids delivered on or near the battlefield, rapid ground or aerial evacuation and the presence of trained medical personnel in field hospitals are just a few of the enterprising developments that frequently save soldiers’ lives. Some of these have been learned through trial and error, while others have been adapted to combat conditions with advances in medical science.

Medicine bottles from 1914, which were used to treat a variety of conditions. Advances in medicine helped reduce the number of deaths from illness



## CLOSING THE WOUND

In the late 16th century French physician Ambroise Paré pioneered techniques in battlefield medicine, such as rapidly closing the arteries that bled profusely as the result of a traumatic amputation to prevent the casualty from dying due to loss of blood.

Physician Ambroise Paré is depicted on the battlefield using a ligature to stop the bleeding of a seriously wounded soldier







## ANAESTHETIC

During the Crimean War, Russian physician Nikolay Pirogov was the first to use ether, an anaesthetic, on the battlefield, reducing the pain of the casualty and contributing to ease of treatment and stabilisation. Pirogov had been the first to use anaesthetic in a surgical setting in 1847, shortly before the war.

*This portable German WWI anaesthetic kit consists of a chloroform bottle, chloroform dropping bottle and Schimmelbusch mask in a bag*

## BLOOD TRANSPORTATION

The transportation of blood in glass tubes, delivered by refrigerator truck, was first introduced during the Spanish Civil War. Transfusions were made possible much more quickly, saving precious time in treatment, along with another innovation of the period, the mobile operating room.

*A blood transfusion kit from World War I, which allowed blood to be taken from a donor and given to a casualty. It was used with some success*



## REMOTE PHYSIOLOGICAL MONITORING

A rather recent development, remote physiological monitoring relays information about casualties, such as vital signs and other data prior, to and during MEDEVAC operations, alerting medical personnel on the condition of incoming wounded. With real-time information on a patient's condition, doctors and nurses are better prepared to deliver appropriate trauma treatment.



*Instruments such as this wristwatch capable of transmitting data are revolutionising battlefield medicine with a new standard of care*

## EVACUATION BY AIR

The use of the helicopter ambulance, or MEDEVAC, first occurred in the China-Burma theatre of World War II. Commonplace in combat zones today, medical airlifts save time in transporting casualties to field hospitals and other medical facilities where more extensive treatment is available.

**"COMMONPLACE IN COMBAT ZONES TODAY, MEDICAL AIRLIFTS SAVE TIME IN TRANSPORTING CASUALTIES TO FIELD HOSPITALS"**



*A casualty is loaded onto a specially adapted Sioux helicopter during a demonstration by the Royal Army Medical Corps for officer students of the Staff College in Mytchett, near Aldershot*



# RAPID RELIEF BY RAIL

The ambulance trains of World War I saved countless lives and lessened the suffering of soldiers wounded in battle





**I**t was the bloodiest day in the history of the British Army. On 1 July 1916 the Battle of the Somme commenced. Before the sun set, 57,470 soldiers became casualties, and 19,240 of them were dead.

During that horrific day and the three that followed, ambulance trains completed 63 treacherous round trips from stations where wounded men lay awaiting evacuation to port cities on the coast of France. The trains brought 33,392 casualties from the combat zone. The immense carnage at the Somme required the trains to carry wounded well beyond their designated capacity. For example, Train No. 29 transported 761 men while fighting raged on 2 July – more than twice its allotted load.

By the time of the Battle of the Somme, it was terribly apparent to soldier and civilian, field marshal and private alike, that World War I had brought death, injury and destruction on such a scale that had previously been impossible to conceive. Without the yeoman service of the ambulance trains, staffed by tireless medical personnel of the Royal Army Medical Corps and Queen Alexandra's Imperial Medical Nursing Service – including doctors, nurses, orderlies and other personnel – the fearful harvest of death reaped in the Great War would doubtless have been substantially higher.

Although the concept of the ambulance train had been tried and proven effective in the 19th

century in the Crimea, American Civil War, the Zulu and Boer Wars, it was the modern combat of the 20th century – facilitated by the machine gun, bolt-action rifle, heavy-calibre artillery and dreaded poison gas – that brought its lifesaving capabilities further to the attention of both the military and the public. Throughout the war of 1914-18, Britain, France and Germany operated ambulance trains, often painted white with the Red Cross emblazoned on their cars for easy recognition, and their contribution was apparent from early in the conflict. In the month of December 1914 alone, more than 100,000 British casualties were evacuated aboard trains from battlefields in Flanders.

The dark clouds of conflict had gathered for some time prior to the outbreak of the war, and two years before the first weapon was fired, the British government,

**“IN THE MONTH OF DECEMBER 1914 ALONE, MORE THAN 100,000 BRITISH CASUALTIES WERE EVACUATED ABOARD TRAINS FROM BATTLEFIELDS IN FLANDERS”**

anticipating tremendous numbers of wounded, authorised the formation of the Railway Executive Committee with responsibilities for the wartime operation of the nation's railways. Within the scope of the committee's charge came the efficient transportation of the wounded that arrived in Britain from battlefields on the European continent. To that end, plans were produced for a dozen hospital trains to operate exclusively in Britain. By the end of 1914, however, when the French were unable to provide adequate locomotives and rolling stock for both the British and French armies, the role of the Railway Executive Committee expanded to provide ambulance trains for use on the continent as well.

Days after Britain entered the war, three locomotives and numerous rail cars were presented to the Royal Army Medical Corps. These were refitted with surgical dressing rooms, patient wards and dispensaries, and were designated British Ambulance Trains 1, 2, and 3. Meanwhile, skilled railway workers were dedicated to the production of ambulance trains, the first of which arrived at Southampton just 20 days after Britain entered the war in August 1914. Built by companies such as the London and South Western Railway, Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, and Great Western and Eastern Railways, 20 ambulance trains were operating in Britain and 31 in France by the end of the war. As

*A group of nurses in front of an ambulance train, before being sent to France in 1917. There were 51 ambulance trains in service, run by dedicated doctors, nurses and orderlies*







*This sketch depicts the nocturnal unloading of an ambulance train at a rail siding in the town of Étaples-sur-Mer, France*

early as 1915, 12 trains had been shipped to the continent and entered service, the most recent of them becoming the first train equipped with purpose-built operating suites to allow surgery to be performed.

As the country mobilised, members of the United Kingdom Flour Millers' Association presented two ambulance trains to the Red Cross. Working cooperatively with a French train, the trio carried 461,844 wounded men from 1915 to the end of the war. Donations and private funds regularly supported the effort to build more ambulance trains. Dolls dressed in nursing uniforms were sold on station platforms to solicit funds.

The ambulance trains themselves were marvels of ingenuity and the utilisation of available space. A typical train consisted of the locomotive and 15 to 20 carriages, including a dispensary car, two kitchens, a personnel car and a brake and storage van, or caboose. As casualties mounted and the demand for ambulance trains increased during the course of the war, designs were modified and improved. The trains might stretch half a kilometre (0.3 miles) along the track. A medical officer, usually with the rank of major, was in charge of the activities of two additional doctors – usually lieutenants – three or four nurses and a complement of 40 orderlies, who cared for a large number of wounded aboard a single train. Designed to carry 400 patients, it was not uncommon for more than 500 to be loaded aboard.

The patient cars were outfitted with berths anchored to the walls on two or three levels, accommodating up to 36 patients each. Some trains were equipped with berths that could

**“IT WAS THE FIRST TASTE OF HOME THAT MANY OF THE MEN, SCARRED PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY BY THEIR EXPERIENCES IN THE TRENCHES, WOULD SAVOUR”**

be raised and lowered, allowing patients who were slightly wounded and able to sit up to enjoy conversation, a cigarette and even a cup of freshly brewed tea. It was the first taste of home that many of the men, scarred physically and emotionally by their experiences in the trenches, would savour. Trains placed in service later in the conflict were equipped with fans to disperse lethal, lingering gas that had been used indiscriminately in chemical warfare attacks.

Casualties were generally moved through stages of evacuation from the front. Regimental aid posts were located 180-275 metres (200-300 yards) from the lines. Stretcher cases and walking wounded received basic care and were then moved to an advanced dressing station another 365 metres (400 yards) to the rear, or another kilometre and a half (one mile) back to a main dressing station, where lifesaving emergency surgery could be performed on a limited basis. From there, patients were carried by truck or horse-drawn wagon to a field ambulance complex, which included more than 200 personnel, operating tents, ward tents and other necessary facilities. Men were

triaged and information on their condition was recorded. The next leg of the evacuation journey took wounded men to the casualty clearing station, several kilometres further to the rear. These expansive facilities covered almost a kilometre of ground, treating as many as 1,000 wounded at a time and providing the most comprehensive medical care available in such close proximity to the fighting.

Ambulance trains operating in France transported the wounded from casualty clearing stations near railheads to base hospitals at such port cities as Rouen, Calais and Boulogne – the busiest location on the coast, where thousands of casualties were taken for the eventual cross-channel voyage to Britain. Experienced orderlies in Boulogne became so proficient that they once unloaded 123 patients from a train in only 19 minutes.

Ambulance trains followed established rail lines from the front to the English Channel ports, and the village of Étaples-sur-Mer in the Pas-de-Calais was a beehive of activity. One of the largest Allied hospital complexes in Europe was established there overlooking the picturesque Canche estuary. Even its 20,000-bed capacity was strained, receiving 40,000 sick and wounded in a single month in 1917, delivered by a dozen ambulance trains. Today, the town is the site of an expansive cemetery where 11,500 soldiers of the British Commonwealth are buried.

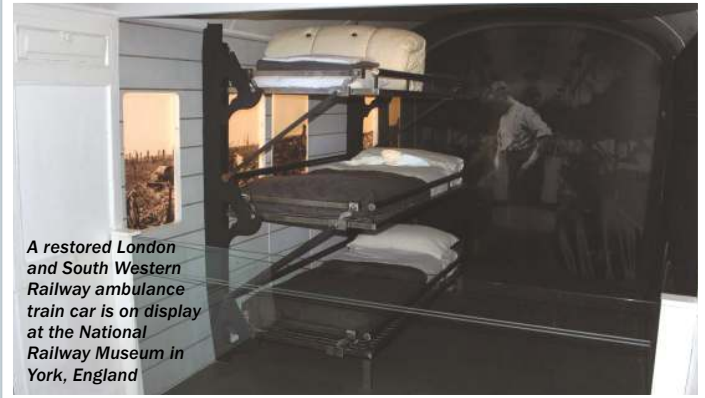
Although swift evacuation was a hallmark of the railway lifeline, travel was difficult at times, and at least one journey from Braisnes in northern France to Rouen required an arduous three days. For some injured soldiers, boarding the train came as a blessed relief. For



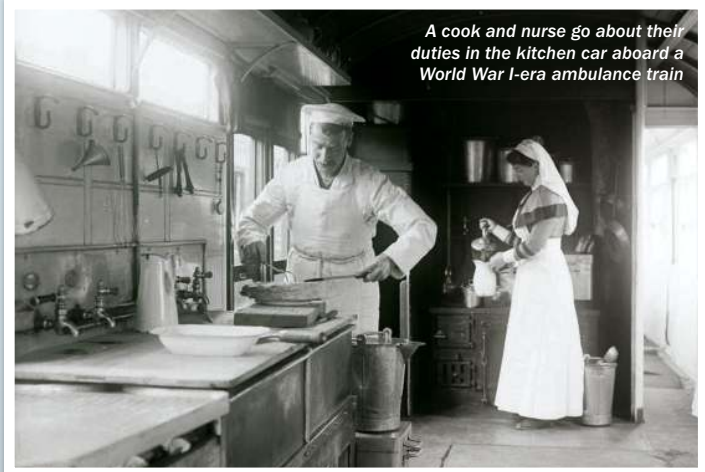
A trio of nurses stand in the operating theatre of an ambulance train rail car during World War I



A restored London and South Western Railway ambulance train car is on display at the National Railway Museum in York, England



A cook and nurse go about their duties in the kitchen car aboard a World War I-era ambulance train



others rail travel was an ordeal in itself. While they were at least in a safer environment and receiving available medical care, the ride was often rough, jostling men with painful wounds or broken bones and adding to their misery. "I remember the journey as a nightmare," one former casualty reflected. "My back was sagging, and I could not raise my knees to relieve the cramp, the bunk above me only a few inches away."

Time was precious, and men continually boarded the trains in soiled uniforms caked with mud, their wounds crudely bandaged and oozing blood. The stench of burned or decaying flesh and other odours was at times overwhelming. Maintaining reasonably sanitary conditions was a constant battle. "They come straight from the trenches," one nurse recalled, "and are awfully happy on the train with the first attempts at comforts they have known. One told me they were just getting their tea one day, relieving the trenches when 'one o' them coal-boxes' sent a 256-lb shell into them, which killed seven and wounded fifteen. One shell! He said he had to help pick them up and it made him sick."

Service aboard an ambulance train on the continent was particularly hazardous. Routinely, the trains approached within 16 kilometres (ten miles) of the front lines to reach casualty clearing stations. When they were in close proximity to ammunition dumps, supply depots or troop concentrations, they often came under fire from enemy artillery and strafing aircraft. One nurse recalled that the concussion of bombs and shells blasted every window out of the 16-car train on which she was serving. An orderly serving in Britain remembered that his train regularly pulled into railway tunnels, taking

## "THE STENCH OF BURNED OR DECAYING FLESH AND OTHER ODOURS WAS AT TIMES OVERWHELMING"

shelter against the bombs dropped by German Zeppelins. A jagged shard of shrapnel once crashed through his onboard office.

Early trains did not provide easy access between rail cars, and nurses caring for patients in multiple carriages were obliged to move outside and step over to the adjacent car. It was a hazardous undertaking, particularly while carrying an armload of medicine and supplies. At night a lantern was necessary, compounding the difficulty.

Ambulance train personnel were often stretched beyond the limits of endurance, working around the clock, on their feet for 24 hours at a time as doctors assessed casualties, nurses dressed wounds and comforted patients and orderlies retrieved water and bandages and cleaned continually. While many of the patients were stabilised before they were placed aboard a train, deaths were inevitable, and the strain of wartime service took its toll on the caregivers. In a letter home, nurse Kate Evelyn Luard wrote of her experience in France: "Imagine a hospital as big as King's College Hospital all packed into a train... No one person can realise the difficulties except those who try to work on it."

Some medical personnel lived aboard the same ambulance train for many months,

forming lasting personal and professional relationships. They treasured the moments of rest and visited one another in the mess rooms that were part of their living quarters. Personal touches were added to make spaces more comfortable, and the trains themselves were equipped with showers and steam heating – veritable luxuries when just outside the window temperatures were freezing and other people had not bathed for lengthy periods.

Many wounded British soldiers were repatriated through the large port cities of Dover and Southampton. During the course of the war, Dover received 1,260,506 casualties, the equivalent of 7,781 fully loaded ambulance trains. After arriving in Britain, the wounded were loaded aboard domestic ambulance trains and taken to hospitals across the country. Railway stations became focal points of the war years for Britons, who said farewell to their sons there as they went off to war and then ventured down to greet many of them again as they came home grievously injured.

One observer told a local newspaper reporter, "The unloading of an ambulance train is always a sad sight. They crawl along, moving very slowly. They are bowed and listless... These men left England fine, alert, young soldiers."

Such is the tragic circumstance of war. In the midst of carnage, though, the ambulance train became an essential component of the British medical care continuum during World War I. By the time the conflict came to a close, 2.7 million wounded soldiers had travelled aboard the ambulance trains. The system's success was such that system was again employed in World War II and during later conflicts of the 20th century.



# NURSING HEROINES

Pioneering women brought the nursing of sick and wounded servicemen and women to the fore

## FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

HER EFFORTS CONTRIBUTED TO THE FORMATION OF A MILITARY NURSING CORPS  
1820-1910 UNITED KINGDOM

Her name is synonymous with modern nursing, and Florence Nightingale is largely responsible for the recognition of the need to organise nursing care in the British Army. Although the scope of her endeavours to improve lives extended beyond the military, Nightingale's awareness of the plight of the sick and wounded during the Crimean War led to her ground-breaking initiative to train nurses and their subsequent deployment in or near theatres of war.

Against the will of her family, Nightingale responded to a lingering call to join the nursing profession a call that she had kept quiet until she reached her mid-20s. She later befriended Sidney Herbert, who became secretary of state for war during the Crimean War and

facilitated her efforts to organise a contingent of nurses to travel to the East.

Spurred by reports of the misery and deplorable conditions pervasive in the Crimea, Nightingale personally trained 38 nurses. They departed England for the war zone in October 1854. Observing firsthand the desperate condition of the wounded, particularly at Selimiye Barracks near Istanbul, Nightingale issued a plea in *The Times* that resulted in the government authorising the fabrication of a hospital that could be transported from England to the Crimea. The efforts of Nightingale and her cadre of nurses are believed to have reduced the mortality rate where they worked from 42 per cent to two per cent.

Nightingale earned the nickname 'The Lady with the Lamp' as she was often seen walking among the wounded during the night, the flickering flame lighting her path. Her work also brought attention to the need for adequate nursing care in British society as a whole.

Her experience in the Crimea was life changing, and she remained dedicated to public service. She became the first recipient of the Royal Red Cross in 1883 and died in London at the age of 90 in 1910.

**"THE EFFORTS OF NIGHTINGALE AND HER CADRE OF NURSES ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE REDUCED THE MORTALITY RATE WHERE THEY WORKED FROM 42 PER CENT TO TWO PER CENT"**

*Nightingale used statistics and charts to demonstrate the need for better nursing and conditions*



Dame Maud McCarthy led QAIMNS during a critical period of growth and demand in World War I

## DAME EMMA MAUD MCCARTHY

MATRON-IN-CHIEF DURING WORLD WAR I, SHE OVERSAW TREMENDOUS EXPANSION  
1859-1949 AUSTRALIA

Australian-born Dame Maud McCarthy travelled to England and became a nurse at London Hospital, Whitechapel, in 1891. She served during the Boer War and, with the outbreak of World War I, sailed aboard the first ship bound for the continent with troops of the British Expeditionary Force. She had been instrumental in the formation of Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS), and upon arrival in Abbeville, France, was appointed matron-in-chief. In 1914 her overall command included 516 nurses. Four years later, it had expanded to more than 6,000.

During the Great War, McCarthy's nurses cared for casualties in unprecedented numbers. Her many accolades included induction into the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (GBE), the Royal Red Cross with bar, the Florence Nightingale Medal and the French Légion d'Honneur. After serving as matron-in-chief of the Territorial Army Nursing Service, she retired in 1925 and died in 1949, aged 89.





**EDITH CAVELL**SELFLESS IN HER DESIRE TO HEAL, SHE BECAME A WARTIME MARTYR  
1865-1915 UNITED KINGDOM

When World War I erupted in 1914, Edith Cavell was already an accomplished nurse. She had gone to Brussels, Belgium, to serve as matron of a newly established nursing school there, and by the time the country fell to the advancing Germans, she had become widely known for treating any soldier in need, regardless of nationality.

During the German occupation, Cavell became involved in clandestine efforts to repatriate Allied soldiers, harbouring wounded men while they were being provided with false identity papers and assisted in their journey to the Dutch frontier. Cavell was betrayed and arrested on 3 August 1915. She was tried by court martial and testified that she had assisted nearly 200 men in evading the German authorities. She was convicted and sentenced to death. Despite an international outcry, the sentence was carried out by a 16-man firing squad on 12 October 1915. Cavell was later venerated by the Church of England.

*Executed by a German firing squad, nurse Edith Cavell gave her life helping others to evade capture during World War I*

**JULIA CATHERINE STIMSON**AN AMERICAN NURSING  
PIONEER, SHE RECEIVED  
THE ROYAL RED CROSS  
1881-1948  
UNITED STATES

An American recipient of the Royal Red Cross in recognition of her contributions, Julia Catherine Stimson is among the pioneers credited with raising modern nursing to a profession in its own right. Stimson received a degree from New York Hospital Training School for Nurses in 1908 and volunteered for service with the US Army when the country entered World War I in April 1917. In addition to the Royal Red Cross, she was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal.

Stimson retired from the US Army in 1937 but was recalled to active duty during World War II to lead the Nursing Council on National Defense, responsible for recruiting thousands of new nurses for service across the globe. She served as president of the American Nursing Association from 1938 to 1944 and achieved the rank of colonel shortly before her retirement and death in 1948, at the age of 67.



*Nursing pioneer Julia Catherine Stimson was an American recipient of the Royal Red Cross, Britain's highest recognition for military nurses*

*Dame Louisa Wilkinson, founder of Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps, salutes. Brigadier H.S. Gillespie stands on the right*

**LOUISA WILKINSON**FOUNDER OF QUEEN  
ALEXANDRA'S ROYAL ARMY  
NURSING CORPS ASSOCIATION  
1889-1968 UNITED KINGDOM

Louisa Wilkinson followed Dame Katharine Jones as matron-in-chief of Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS) in 1944, at the height of the organisation's greatest challenge, when nursing personnel were deployed around the globe with British Army forces during World War II. A native of Sunderland, she had begun her nursing training in the city in 1911. She had just completed her course of study when World War I broke out, and she promptly volunteered for the QAIMNS. In December 1917 she married Captain Robert J. Wilkinson of the Royal Irish Fusiliers. He was killed in action weeks later.

Wilkinson remained active after World War II, founding the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps Association in 1947. Among her decorations are the Royal Red Cross, both first and second Class, and recognition as dame commander of the Order of the British Empire. She died in 1968 at the age of 79.

**JANET PILGRIM**LEADER OF QUEEN  
ALEXANDRA'S ROYAL ARMY  
NURSING CORPS IN IRAQ  
1966- UNITED KINGDOM

In 2008, then-Major Janet Pilgrim received the Royal Red Cross from Queen Elizabeth II for outstanding service with Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps in Iraq. Pilgrim was responsible for operations at Basra air base's hospital, the largest facility of its kind fielded by the British Army since the Falklands War nearly 30 years earlier. A graduate of King's College London, Pilgrim also served in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan, where she was in charge of the hospital at Camp Bastion in Helmand Province.

In the summer of 2007 Pilgrim and her comrades treated 92 wounded soldiers in Basra, losing 20 patients while the facility was under periodic rocket attack. Nicknamed 'Florence of Arabia' by the media, Pilgrim was nominated by *Cosmopolitan* magazine for its Ultimate Women Awards in 2008. She has publicly disclosed that she suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder and is an advocate for better mental health services in the British military.



**"AN ARMY WAS TO BE SENT TO THE EAST,  
AND, AS PART OF THAT ARMY, THREE  
BATTALIONS OF BRITISH GUARDS WERE  
TO FORM WHAT WOULD BE CALLED THE  
GUARDS BRIGADE"**



Guardsmen save their Colours at Inkerman. The Guards lost 538 men killed or wounded during the battle





A colourised photograph of William McGregor, a colour-sergeant of the Scots Fusilier Guards, who is wearing the Crimea Medal

# THE EMPIRE'S SCARLET HEROES

Three battalions of British Guards found themselves thrown into the horrors of the Crimean War. Bloodied in battle and ravaged by disease, the gallant Guardsmen tell their own story

WORDS MARK SIMNER

On 20 September 1854 James McKechnie, a 28-year-old sergeant of the Scots Fusilier Guards, had just committed an act of valour that would see him become one of the very first recipients of the Victoria Cross. During a moment of dangerous disorder for his battalion at the Battle of the Alma, he took the initiative and rallied his men around the Colours and was wounded in the process. So bitter was the fighting that McKechnie would be just one of 12 Guardsmen to receive the VC during the costly Crimean War.

Earlier that same year, on 10 February, a brigade order was issued in anticipation of war with Russia. An army was to be sent to the east, and, as part of that army, three battalions of British Guards were to form what would be called the Guards Brigade. These included the Third Battalion Grenadier Guards, the First Battalion Coldstream Guards, and the First Battalion Scots Fusilier Guards.

All three battalions, which would number the best part of 1,000 officers and men each, were expected to embark on their transports at Southampton on 18 February, although in the event they would not set sail until later in the month. Their destination was to be the Dardanelles, after briefly disembarking at Malta en route.

During the voyage to the Mediterranean island, Captain Alfred Tipping of the Grenadier Guards, who

was not usually prone to seasickness, described his sea journey aboard the transport *Manilla* as a somewhat rough one: "The Wind blew hard against us, with a heavy sea, of course everyone was now more or less sick ... I always find myself nearly the only one on board, who does not suffer, when it is at all rough, but with seeing so many ill all around, I must say I was nearly being upset myself."

When his battalion disembarked from the transport *Orinoco* on 5 March, Captain Charles Wilson of the Coldstream Guards was pleased to find Malta was not riddled with disease and sickness as some had feared: "The Lazzaretto, and forts adjacent, were the quarters assigned to the Guards ... the quarantine harbour being cool lounging places, whence you get a charming view of the churches, convents, batteries, and palaces of which the Maltese metropolis [Valletta] is made up." He went on to say, "Europe has no prettier town than Valletta" and "the fair sex is the first object of the British officer's attention".

Charming and entertaining as it was, the Guards' stay in Malta would be a short one, for on 24 April they re-embarked on their allocated transports for the final leg of the journey to the Dardanelles, arriving at Scutari five days later and making camp at the little village of Kadikoi. While at Scutari the inefficiencies of the British Army, which would later be such a prominent feature of the Crimean War, quickly became apparent. Wilson recorded, "The utter



insufficiency of means of land-transport greatly perplexed the authorities, and judging from the ever-varying complexion of the memorandums, orders, and notifications on the subject... it was unlikely a satisfactory solution of the problem would be promptly reached."

A brief move to Bulgaria followed on 13 June, when the Guardsmen embarked on their transports to Varna, where they made camp outside the city the following day. July and August saw the Guards Brigade conduct a number of marches, and this period of relative inactivity must have made some of the men believe that war was now becoming unlikely. However, on 29 August the Guardsmen embarked on their transports once more: this time they would be sailing for the Crimea. Tipping, Wilson and thousands of other Guardsmen were about to be thrown into the horrors of the Crimean War.

### Invasion

The Grenadier Guards made their way to the Crimea aboard the transport *Simoon*, while the *Coldstream Guards* were split between the *Simoon* and *Tonning*. The Scots Fusilier Guards, meanwhile, found themselves crammed aboard the *Kangaroo*.

Without any reliable maps to assist them, the British had taken the decision to land the army at Kalamita Bay, where they disembarked on 14 September without encountering any resistance from the Russians. Once ashore, the Guards Brigade, along with the rest of the army, marched five kilometres (three miles) inland and bivouacked.

No land transport of any quantity had been provided for the British troops. It had, wrongly as it turned out, been assumed that horses

and other baggage animals would be procured in the Crimea itself. As a result, most of the Guardsmen were forced to leave their packs on the sea transports, and instead they rolled essential items in their blankets, which they then slung across their shoulders and chests.

With no available change of clothing, over the next few months the Guardsmen became dirty and infested with lice. To add insult to injury, when the men were able to get their packs back they found that they had been rifled through and many items were missing. Tipping complained of the lack of provisions for him and his men: "On the first day of landing we procured some fowls from the country people; however the French have been before us, and ransacked every cottage for food, so we shall get no more here."

There was little time, however, to worry about missing packs and lack of provisions, for orders to march towards the Alma River were soon given. The Guards Brigade formed part of the First Division, under the command of H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge, which advanced behind the Light Division. During the march, many men of the British Army became victim of the dreaded disease cholera. Wilson remembered the horrors suffered during the advance before the first shot of the campaign had even been fired: "We had invaded an enemy's country without means of transporting the sick and wounded beyond a few 'stretchers' in the hands of bandmen and drum-boys! The sick and wounded of 27,000 British soldiers were to

be carried bodily over burning steppes, where water was not."

The sufferings of the Guardsmen, however, would quickly become a secondary concern when, at last, the enemy was encountered. Lieutenant Colonel Sir John Ross of Bladensburg, author of *The Coldstream Guards in the Crimea*, noted, "In the afternoon the attention of the troops was diverted from these scenes of suffering; shots were heard in the front... however, the firing proved but a skirmish; for, after the expenditure of a few rounds, the Russians... moved back."

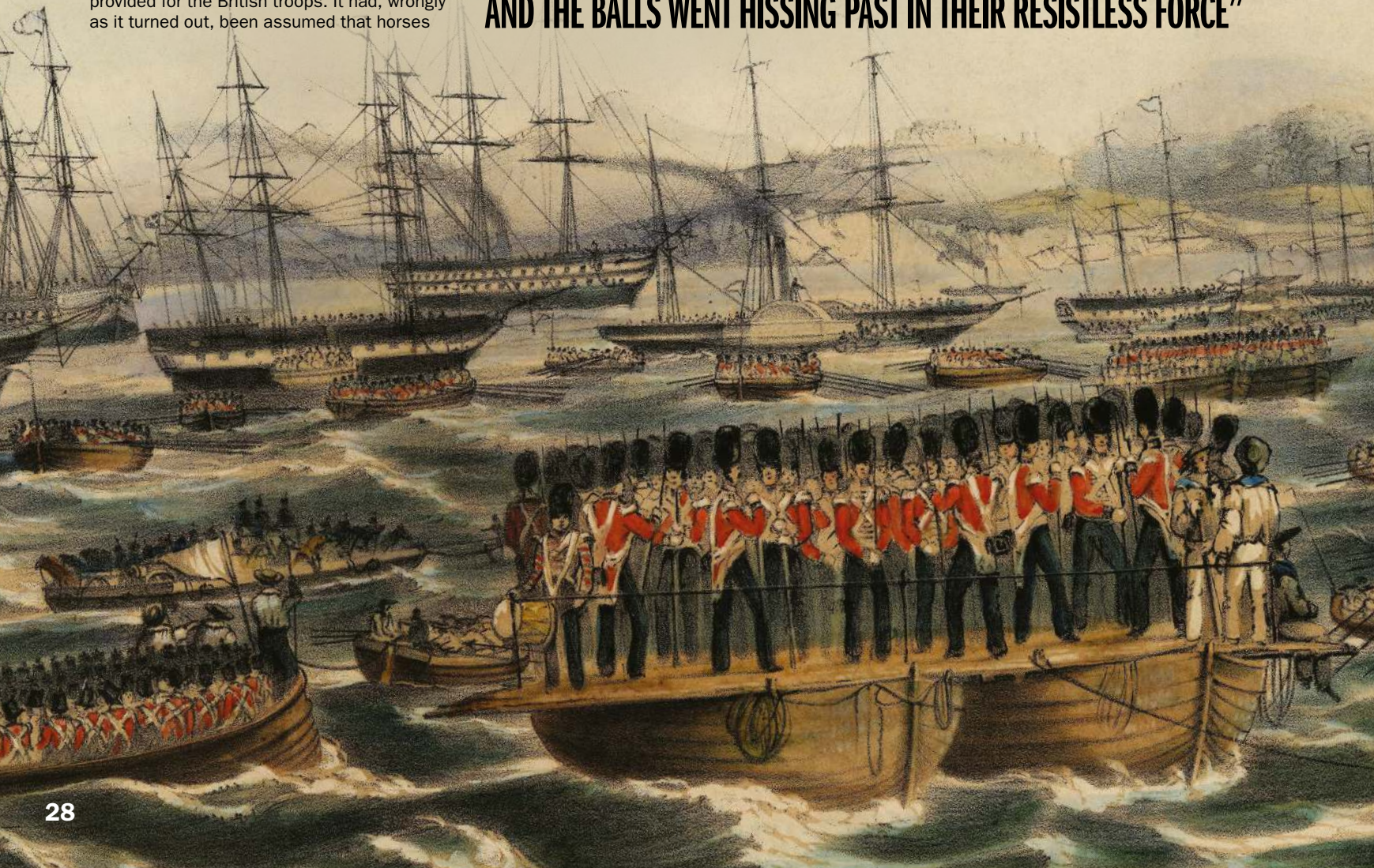
An order to bivouac for the night was received, but the next day the Guardsmen would fight their first major action of the war.

### First blood

The Battle of the Alma took place on 20 September 1854. A number of vivid accounts were penned in the days following the action, including some by men of the Guards Brigade. Tipping described the moment during the initial advance of the brigade when he first saw the long-awaited enemy: "We could plainly see thousands of bayonets, glistening in the sun's rays on the top of the hill [overlooking the village of Alma], and crowning some rising ground on the highest point of which was an unfinished building, which was evidently surrounded by a mass of troops."

After a temporary halt of about half an hour, the Grenadier Guards recommenced their advance, during which dense smoke could be

**"AS THE MEN SAW THEM APPROACHING, THEY OPENED THEIR RANKS, AND THE BALLS WENT HISSING PAST IN THEIR RESISTLESS FORCE"**







seen rising above the village of Alma. Tipping continued his description of the beginning of the battle: "The further we proceeded, and the heavier became the roar of the cannon, and the great ponderous round shot came bounding along the ground like cricket balls. As the men saw them approaching, they opened their ranks, and the balls went hissing past in their resistless force."

Also present at the battle was Wilson, who recorded the advance of the brigade from the point of view of the Coldstream Guards: "Suddenly, just as we reached the gardens bordering the Alma, a murderous storm of round shot and shell broke upon us; we crouched for a few moments behind the embankments of the vineyard, but the virulence of that diabolic artillery was no short livid spurt; so onwards, through thick and thin."

Pushing their way up the heights, the Guardsmen struggled to push their way through the vineyard, which was interspersed with fruit trees and intersected by ditches. Wilson continued, "We are in a very hell [with] nothing

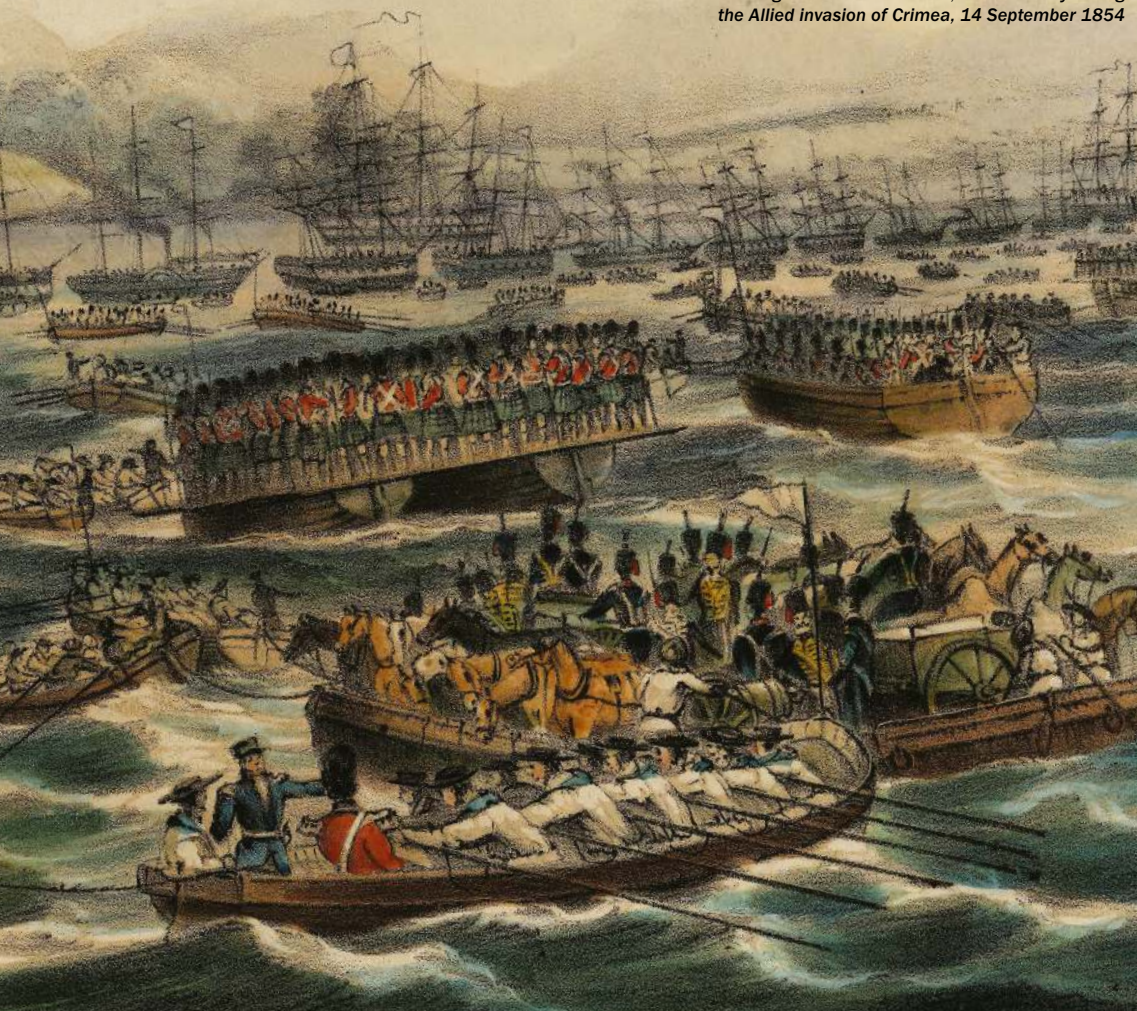
**Above:** The Third Battalion Grenadier Guards depart London for their journey to the Dardanelles and the Crimean War

to be heard, save the humming of shells, the whiz of round-shot, the rattle of grape and canister. The trees crash and split around, the ground is torn up under our feet, our comrades are beaten down."

Meanwhile, Captain Hugh Drummond of the Scots Fusilier Guards witnessed what he later described as an astonishing sight: "The Light Division had crossed just before us, and we were scrambling out of the river under the bank, not yet quite formed, when to our astonishment they, the Light Division... formed squares in front of us, and began to retire, for just in front of us was such a battery as none of us expected".

Despite this shocking revelation, the commander of the Guards Brigade, Sir Henry Bentinck, ordered the Scots Fusilier Guards to support the Light Division. Drummond remembered what happened next: "We blazed into them [the Russians] with our Minies and marched on straight to the entrenchment under

*The Guards Brigade lands at Old Fort, Kalamita Bay during the Allied invasion of Crimea, 14 September 1854*



# BATTALIONS AT THE FRONT

THE GUARDS BRIGADE SENT TO CRIMEA CONSISTED OF THE THIRD GRENADEIR GUARDS, FIRST COLDSTREAM GUARDS AND FIRST SCOTS FUSILIER GUARDS

## GRENADEIR GUARDS

**HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE (EVIL BE TO HIM WHO EVIL THINKS)**

Able to trace its lineage to 1656, the Third Battalion of the Grenadier Guards deployed to the Crimea in September 1854. The 3rd battalion took part in the Battles of the Alma and Inkerman, and the Siege of Sevastopol. In recent years, the regiment has seen service in Iraq and Afghanistan.



## COLDSTREAM GUARDS

**NULLI SECUNDUS (SECOND TO NONE)**

The oldest regiment in the regular British Army with continuous service, the First Battalion of the Coldstream Guards is able to trace its origins back to the English Civil War. In 2010 members of the regiment played a major role in Operation Moshtarak in Afghanistan.



**"THE FIRST BATTALION OF THE COLDSTREAM GUARDS IS ABLE TO TRACE ITS ORIGINS BACK TO THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR"**

## SCOTS GUARDS

**NEMO ME IMPUNE LACESSIT (NO ONE PROVOKES ME WITH IMPUNITY)**

Known as the Scots Fusilier Guards at the time of the Crimean War, the regiment currently boasts 93 battle honours and 11 Victoria Crosses. Recently it has seen service in Iraq and Afghanistan.





# GUARDS OF HONOUR

12 GUARDSMEN RECEIVED THE VICTORIA CROSS DURING THE CRIMEAN WAR, BEING AMONG THE EARLIEST RECIPIENTS OF THE NEWLY INSTITUTED AWARD

Of the 12 VCs awarded to men of the Guards Brigade during the Crimean War, four went to the Grenadier Guards, three to the Coldstream Guards and five to the Scots Fusilier Guards. Four were awarded for actions at the Battle of the Alma, five for the Battle of Inkerman and three for the Siege of Sevastopol.

Lieutenant Colonel Henry Percy of the Grenadier Guards received his VC for Inkerman, when he and his men became surrounded and without ammunition. His citation stated, "Colonel Percy, by his knowledge of the ground, although wounded, extricated these men, and, passing under a heavy fire from the Russians then in the Sandbag Battery, brought them safe to where ammunition was to be obtained, thereby saving some 50 men and enabling them to renew the combat."

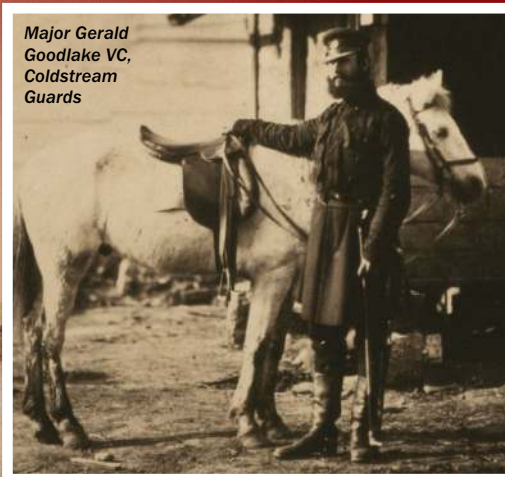
Another VC for the Battle of Inkerman was that awarded to Major Gerald Goodlake of the Coldstream Guards. He was in command of a party of sharpshooters holding Windmill Ravine when he came up against a larger force of Russian soldiers. Here it was reported that he and his men "killed thirty-eight (one an officer) and took three prisoners." He also showed "distinguished gallantry" when his sharpshooters surprised a picquet and "the knapsacks and rifles of the enemy's party fell into his hands".

One of the VCs to the Scots Fusilier Guards went to Captain Robert Loyd-Lindsay. When the line of his regiment became disordered he "stood firm with the Colours, and by his example and energy, greatly tended to restore order."

**"WHEN THE LINE OF HIS REGIMENT BECAME DISORDERED HE 'STOOD FIRM WITH THE COLOURS, AND BY HIS EXAMPLE AND ENERGY, GREATLY TENDED TO RESTORE ORDER'"**



Lieutenant Colonel Henry Percy VC, Grenadier Guards



Major Gerald Goodlake VC, Coldstream Guards



Captain Robert Loyd-Lindsay VC, Scots Fusilier Guards



such a fire, and got half way up, and in another minute should have been in the place, when the remains of the 7th, 23rd and 33rd [of the Light Division]... retired... right through our battalion, and regularly swept part of our right wing away... and then we had a desperate fight."

The Russians attempted to drive the Scots Fusilier Guards off, but the Grenadier Guards soon appeared on the right of Drummond's battalion, while the Coldstream Guards similarly arrived on the left. There had been some confusion when an order was repeatedly given for the Guards to retire, but it was quickly realised to have been a mistake, and the advance resumed.

Drummond recalled the moment the Guards inflicted great destruction upon the Russians: "We poured in such volleys as astonished their weak minds, killing and wounding hundreds; in the meantime the Highland brigade in line to our left brought their shoulders up by battalions in echelon, and their firing on the flank was quite beautiful. The enemy retreated in disorder".

The Battle of the Alma ended in Allied victory over the Russians, although the outcome owed more to the determination and bravery of the soldiers, particularly the Guardsmen, rather than the skill of their generals.

### The soldiers' battle

On 5 November the men of the Guards Brigade would fight their next major action of the war at a place called Inkerman. Again it would be a 'soldiers' battle', in which the Guards Brigade would play a prominent part.

Colonel Edward Reynardson, who commanded the Third Grenadier Guards, recalled the moment his battalion went into action: "When we got to the scene of the action, which was about an hour after it commenced, we were under a very severe fire of shells and some shot from the overwhelming force of Russian artillery and as we had not got into position, they were doing mischief on crowning the height."

## "THE OUTCOME OWED MORE TO THE DETERMINATION AND BRAVERY OF THE SOLDIERS, PARTICULARLY THE GUARDSMEN, RATHER THAN THE SKILL OF THEIR GENERALS"

In front of Reynardson was a British redoubt that had been taken by the Russians, who subsequently stationed within it a large body of men in order to defend it. As the Grenadier Guards advanced, these Russians poured a heavy fire into the ranks of the oncoming Guardsmen. Nevertheless, Reynardson and his men pushed on and took the redoubt back, suffering much loss as they did so.

According to Reynardson, who had had his charger shot from under him, the battle soon began to turn against the Grenadier Guards: "We were pretty much well left to ourselves. Once from the overwhelming forces of Russians and their turning our flank from such insufficiency of support, we were obliged to retire behind the breastwork and the redoubt was retaken by the Russians."

Nevertheless, the Grenadier Guards fought back, delivering a sharp fire into the Russian ranks, and when their ammunition began to run out they pelted their enemy with stones. Eventually, the Russians withdrew down the hill, and Reynardson ordered his men to conduct a bayonet charge but not to go down the hill after them. Unfortunately, some of the Guardsmen, flushed with success, charged too far and the Russians once again almost outflanked the British soldiers. Reynardson next ordered a retirement, taking up new positions behind a breastwork in the hope of replenishing his battalion's ammunition.

Captain George Higginson, the adjutant of the Third Grenadier Guards, wrote a description of what happened next: "I looked at the Colours I thought for the last time and I believe everyone down to the private soldiers thought that the poor old 3rd Battalion was doomed... Not a round of ammunition was left and we were being peppered on three sides."

At this moment of doom the fortunes of the Guardsmen suddenly turned in their favour, through a mix of bravery and determination. Higginson continued, "Sticking close to the Colours ... the men went up the hill at the charge and literally charged home a distance of not less than 1/4 of a mile [0.4 kilometres] to the upper redoubt. God alone knows how thankful we were when we sprang through the embrasures and fell utterly exhausted in this secure rallying place."

As the battle entered its next phase, the Guards Brigade would find their French allies coming to their assistance. Captain Wilson of the Coldstream Guards thought he and his men were "in for it", when, almost out of the blue, "Hark, the pas de charge! The toll of fifty drums! The bray of fifty clarions! We're saved! We're saved! See, clouds of Zouaves, and Algerians! ... As they come bounding towards us, we flourish our muskets with rapture in the air. We cry 'Thank God!'" The Guardsmen then renewed their attack, assisted by the French, shooting, stabbing, bludgeoning and trampling over the Russians. Wilson described this moment in the action as a "slaughter house", with little mercy shown towards their enemy.

As the battle dragged on, things again began to turn and looked desperate for the Allies. However, the turning point in the action came when further reinforcements finally arrived. Wilson again remembered, "With reinforcements came recoil. Although the Muscovites were over and over again rallied, and brought to the scratch by their brave officers, they no longer made headway, nay, they lost ground every minute."

*The Scots Fusilier Guards in action during the Battle of the Alma, 20 September 1854*





Eventually the Russians began to fall back, and a general retreat followed. The Allied victory, however, came at a price. Among the Guards Brigade some 538 men had been lost – almost half the number of their men who had engaged in the battle.

Drummond, in a letter to his family, wrote of the slaughter: "It was a very stiff fight, we had to repel four separate attacks, each time with fresh men, before we got reinforcements up. Our loss is terrible! Irreparable! Nine of the Coldstream [officers] killed; we have eight [more] wounded."

## A harsh winter

Much has been written about the harsh Crimean winter of 1854-55. The British soldiers suffered in particular, due to their terrible lack of winter clothing and other vital supplies. There was a shortage of fuel too, and sickness quickly set in among the soldiers. The men of the Guards Brigade were no exception to this awful situation.

In November a great storm sunk some 30 Allied ships, many of them carrying much needed supplies. Captain Drummond recalled his experience of the storm when he was aboard the Retribution, recovering from wounds he had received in battle: "A fearful storm began in the morning [14 November], and raged all day. We parted two cables out of three, and drifted from where we were originally anchored, half a mile [0.8 kilometres] out to sea... hanging by one cable; our guns thrown overboard; green seas washing all over; our yard struck by lightning."

The loss of precious winter supplies and the deteriorating weather conditions quickly took its toll on the army on land. Early in the New Year, Drummond witnessed the sorry state of the men: "Our army is in a desperate state, not a man hutted, and hardly any warm clothes issued, and a foot of snow on the ground. Ships, full of huts and warm clothing, are at Balaclava, but nothing finds its way up to camp; there is no means of transport."

Even Lieutenant Colonel Henry Percy of the Grenadier Guards, who tended to write about the progress of the war rather than the more trivial aspects of the living conditions, felt compelled to write the following words: "We are now far from comfortable, the south-westerly gales continuing without interruption with very heavy rain which makes our tents and everything moist and unpleasant, and an utter impossibility of going out without being up to one's calf in mud and water."

As the weeks passed by, the number of men fit for duty greatly dwindled. Drummond again noted: "I found our men in an awful plight – only 100 left fit for duty, and some of them very shaky. Almost all have scurvy, and dysentery kills two, three, or four every day; they have been so terribly overworked and so ill-clad and fed."

Perhaps the only consolation for the surviving men of the Guards Brigade during the winter of 1854-55 was that there was very little in the way of fighting to be done. However, when the weather improved there would still be much fighting ahead, until Sevastopol finally fell in September 1855.

## The fall of Sevastopol

Throughout much of 1855, the horrific Siege of Sevastopol had dragged relentlessly on. In June an unsuccessful attack was mounted by the Allies on the Malakoff and the Redan redoubts. For this the Guards Brigade had been held in reserve, while the action met with abject failure for the Anglo-French force. Captain Drummond had expected something decisive to come out of the result, but he, as with many in the brigade, was left feeling desperately disappointed. After the attack he wrote, "Why assault it [the Redan]? If we take the Malakoff the Redan is untenable; whoever has the Malakoff commands the whole surrounding country and works."

Another tragedy struck the British Army on 28 June, when Lord Raglan died of dysentery and depression. Although he was far from universally loved, Captain Gerald Goodlake of the Coldstream Guards felt he would be missed for "what he could have done for the Army at home." Command of the British Army in the Crimea passed to General Sir James Simpson, but he disliked the position and quickly resigned. In his place came Lieutenant General William Codrington, a Coldstream Guardsman. Many men of the Guards Brigade were probably pleased to see one of their own in command.

Another to die in the Crimea was Drummond, by then a brevet major, when, on 13 August, a Russian shell exploded near the trench he was in. Lieutenant Colonel William Scarlett of the Scots Fusilier Guards described his death: "A shell exploded over his head and a piece entered his brain. He never opened his eyes or shewed any sign of consciousness after... He was gently carried up to camp, and he drew his last breath at about half-past nine."

On 31 August an order was issued to the Guards Brigade to exchange their Minié rifles for the new 1853 Pattern Enfield rifle. The

Crimean War had come at a time when the British Army was undergoing major change with regards to its weapons, moving away from the 1842 Pattern smoothbore muskets, which were being slowly replaced by far more accurate rifles. Many, including the Guards, had gone to war in the Crimea armed with the Minié, but the Enfield would come to see much service before the war was over.

An end to the war, however, was now finally in sight. The Russians retreated from Sevastopol in September and the city subsequently fell to the Allied forces on the 9th. The siege had lasted a staggering 337 days. Peace negotiations followed, with the war officially ending on 30 March 1856. The Crimean War had been a bloody affair for the men of the Guards Brigade, but the survivors could now look forward to a return home after over two years away.

## Homeward journey

With the war over, the Third Grenadier Guards would be the first battalion of the Guards Brigade to leave the Crimea, boarding the St Jean d'Acre at Kamiesch Bay on 3 June 1856. The next day the First Coldstream Guards embarked aboard the Agamemnon, also at Kamiesch Bay. A few days later, on 11 June, the First Scots Fusilier Guards were ordered to board the Princess Royal at Kasatch.

The Coldstream Guards were the first to arrive home, on 28 June, landing at Spithead, from where they moved by train to Aldershot. Next came the Third Grenadier Guards, who disembarked at Portsmouth on 1 July, and likewise travelled to Aldershot by train. Finally, the First Scots Fusilier Guards arrived at Portsmouth on 4 July, before likewise journeying on to Aldershot.

About a week later, the Guards Brigade went to London and paraded in Hyde Park. Higginson recalled "an inspection of the line by the Queen, followed by a march past and a general advance in line completed the ceremony. A few kindly words of welcome from Prince Albert, and the three battalions, which had endeavoured during an absence of two years and a half to uphold the dignity of the Brigade of Guards, returned to their ordinary duties as Household troops."

Now firmly back in the routine life of peacetime, he continued, "I returned to duty as a subaltern, and within three days was in command of the Buckingham Palace Guard as a Lieutenant!"

British artillery bombards Sevastopol. The siege of the city lasted 337 days, until it finally fell on 9 September 1855



Images: Alamy, Getty



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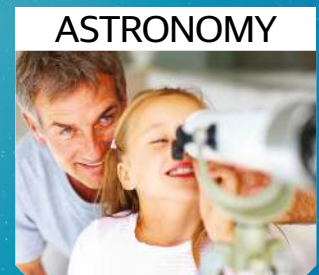
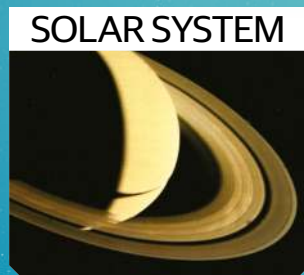


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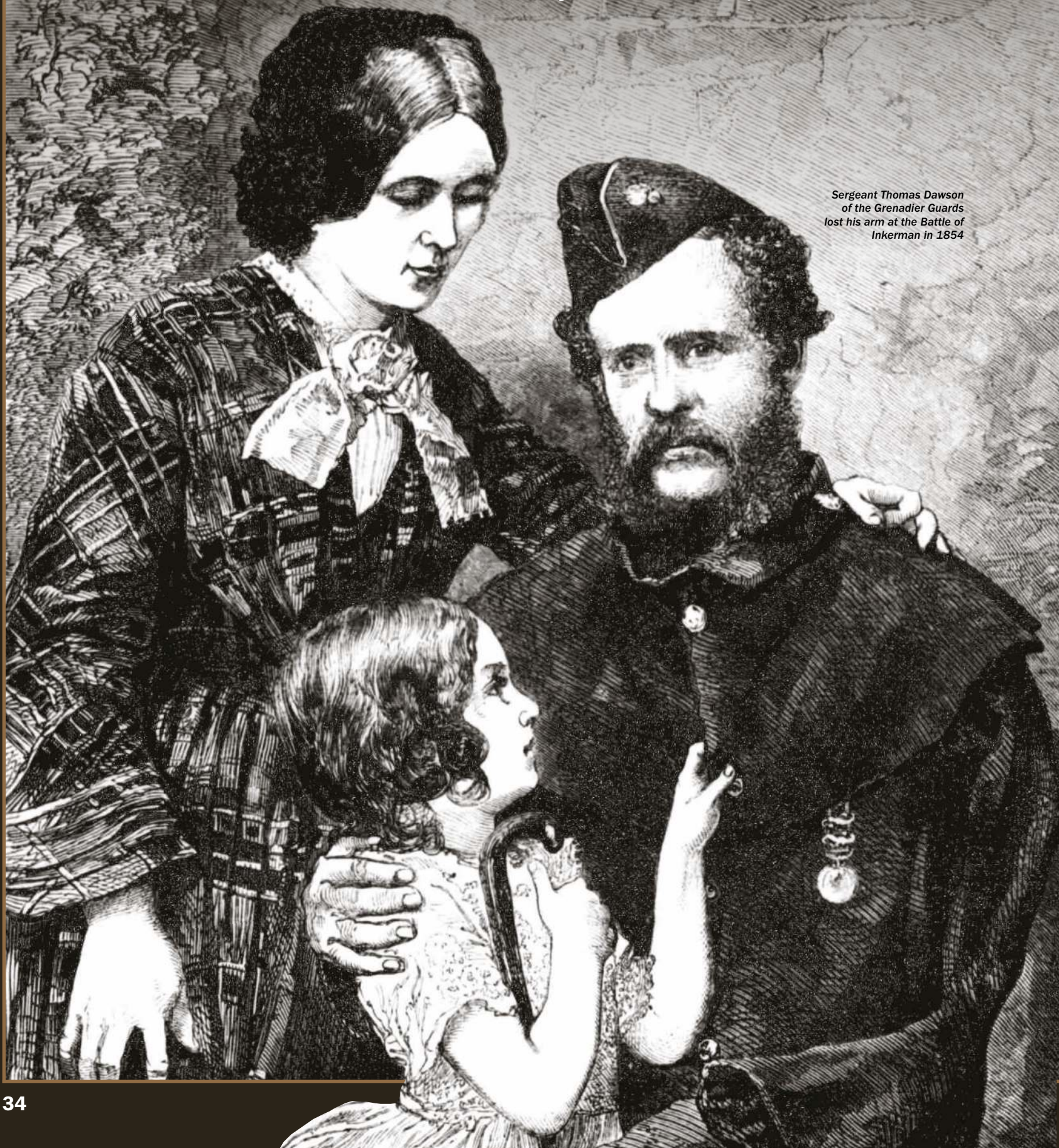


# BROKEN GUARDSMEN

Streams of wounded and sick soldiers began to arrive at Portsmouth and Plymouth from Crimea, and their poor treatment caused a scandal.

But the Guards received a very different reception WORDS GLENN FISHER

*Sergeant Thomas Dawson  
of the Grenadier Guards  
lost his arm at the Battle of  
Inkerman in 1854*





**T**he wounded and sick of the Guards Brigade were not treated in the same way as the men of the line. They would not be seen wandering around the disembarkation ports waiting for transport – wounded were taken by train to London and attended to at the Guards hospital in Rochester Row, Westminster. Their return in 1855 was in stark contrast to the enthusiastic scenes of their departure in February 1854.

Once at Rochester Row the invalids were sent to the rooms designated for their regiments. The queen felt a close personal relationship to 'her' Guards. They were visited by the Duke of Cambridge at the end of February 1855 and, like the line, photographed. Group portraits of the Guards invalids seem to have been preferred to individual portraits.

On 20 February the queen wrote of her meeting with the wounded Grenadiers in the Marble Hall at Buckingham Palace in her journal. She described Sergeant Thomas Dawson as a "fine tall man" and that "it made one's heart bleed" to see such tall, noble-looking men so mutilated.

3933 Sergeant Thomas Dawson was photographed as part of such a group at Wellington Barracks, and also had an individual portrait taken. As well as being seen by the queen at Buckingham Palace, he was the only noncommissioned officer to give evidence before the Roebuck Committee in its investigations regarding the state of the army before Sevastopol. He described the ambulance carriage that took him for embarkation at Scutari and how he had to use his remaining hand to hold his shoulder to stop it being banged against the side of the carriage.

Dawson had lost his left arm from a gunshot wound at the Battle of Inkerman. He was a labourer from Wentworth, Yorkshire, and had enlisted in London in September 1839 aged 18 years and nine months and was over 1.8 metres (6 feet) tall. He deserted in June 1841 but rejoined the regiment in the following month and took his punishment. He was imprisoned for two months and, as a deserter, had to endure being tattooed with the letter 'D' under his arm. He fell foul of military law again in August 1847 when he was tried for being drunk on duty and was sentenced to 40 days in the cells. Thereafter he settled down and was promoted to corporal in 1853 and sergeant in February 1854. He was present at the Alma, Balaklava and Inkerman and it was noted on his discharge papers that his reckonable service, which had been forfeited earlier, was to be restored "in consequence of his gallant conduct in the Crimea".

On 18 May 1855 he was among the troops who received their Crimean medals personally from the hand of Queen Victoria on Horseguards Parade. Two days later he was discharged from the service. His Chelsea out-pensioner number was 831. Pension records and census returns indicate he lived in the north of England, settling in Liverpool, where he resided into the 1890s. He was the recipient of a permanent pension of 2/- (10p) per day. Dawson died in December 1897.

Also on the same parade was Corporal Frederick Bridges of the Coldstream Guards. He was photographed on the extreme right of



*Sergeant Dawson was one of the men who received their Crimean medals from Queen Victoria herself*

## **"HE WAS AMONG THE TROOPS WHO RECEIVED THEIR CRIMEAN MEDALS PERSONALLY FROM THE HAND OF QUEEN VICTORIA ON HORSEGUARDS PARADE. TWO DAYS LATER HE WAS DISCHARGED FROM THE SERVICE"**

a group composed of other regiments, wearing an oilskin-covered forage cap and the coatee that was worn by the Guards when they left to go east the previous year. His buttons are arranged in twos. The large epaulettes are prominent, and there is a white worsted good conduct ring on his right sleeve. He is holding a walking stick and his right leg appears unnaturally turned in.

Frederick Bridges was born in September 1825 in Stonham Aspoll in Suffolk and was a labourer by trade. He enlisted into the Coldstream Guards at Ipswich in January 1848 and was promoted to corporal in July 1854. He survived the battle of the Alma unscathed despite facing the hail of fire from Russian forces in the Great Redoubt on the Russian right. It was at Inkerman that he received the severe gunshot wound that was to end his military career and send him home.

Writing in her journal after the medal parade on Horse Guards, Queen Victoria remembered giving the Crimean Medal to Bridges. She wrote, "to Corporal Bridges and Sergeant Austin, the former limping along with difficulty, I said how well their gallant services had earned the medal."

When the parade was over, the recipients joined the royal party in the gardens of Buckingham Palace. The queen wrote, "poor Corporal Bridges came quite the last and I went up to speak to him and to ask him how his wound was doing. He said he was getting on

well and I added how glad I was to have given him his medal, to which he replied 'God bless your majesty, I shall ever be grateful for it.'"

In Bridges's discharge papers, the medical report stated that Corporal Frederick Bridges was in Lieutenant Colonel Strong's company, Coldstream Guards. The discharge papers also recorded that his conduct and character were "that of a good and efficient soldier, seldom in hospital, trustworthy and sober". Bridges was finally discharged on 12 June 1855. This may explain why he wears the older coatee instead of the new tunic: there would be little point in issuing the new uniform to an invalid who was about to be discharged. As well as being photographed, Bridges was sketched by the artist George Houseman Thomas, and this work is part of the Royal Collection.

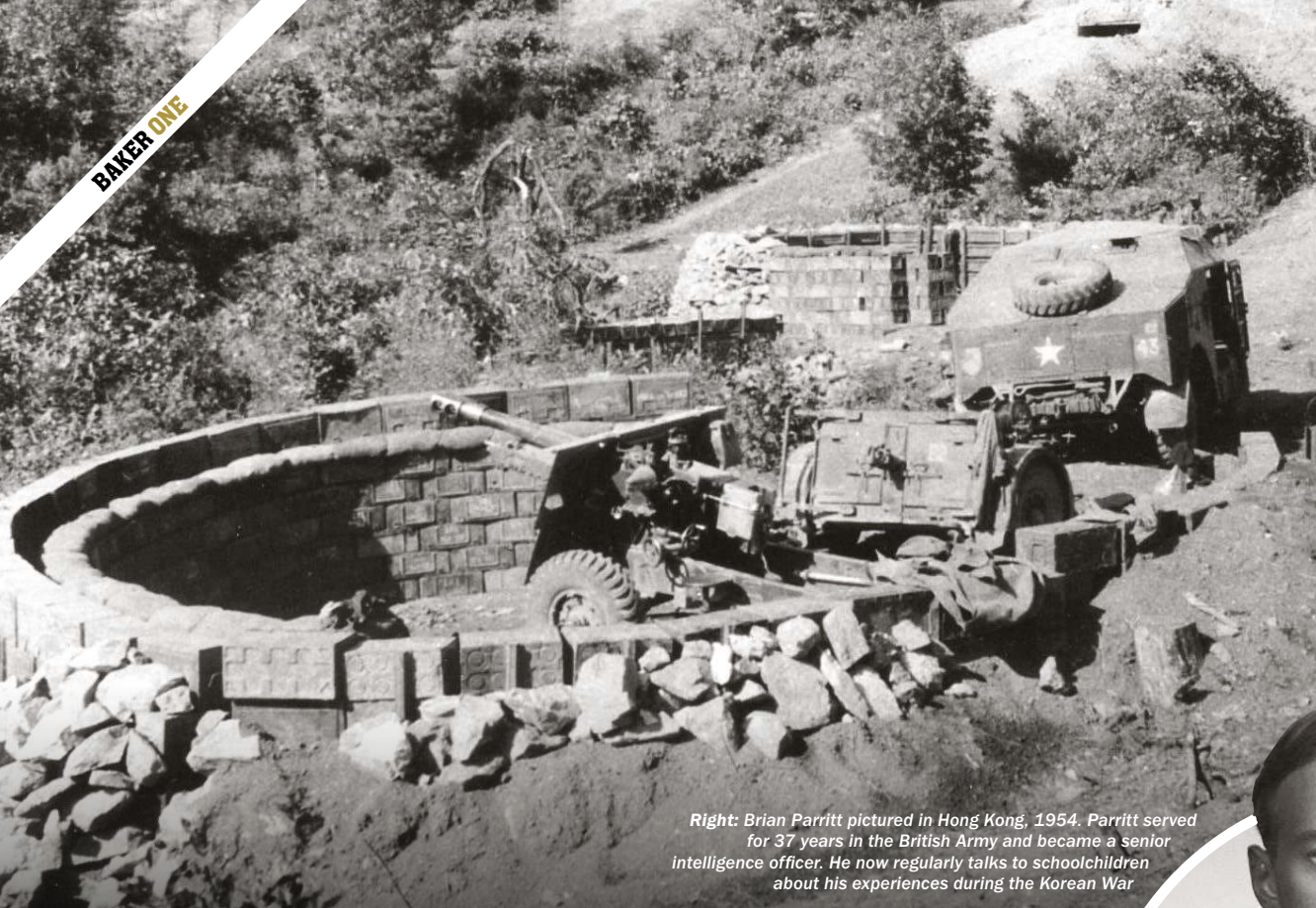
Bridges stayed in London after his discharge and within six years was married. He is recorded as a "Pensioner (Army)" in the 1861 census, living in Westminster. By 1871 he was the head of his small family living in lodgings in Ponsonby Place. His son Frederick was born around 1868 in Westminster. Bridges's occupation was recorded as a "messenger". In this year he had further treatment to his wounded right leg and ankle. His discharge documents contain a report made in 1901, which refers to the treatment, stating that "pieces of bone were removed".

In the 1881 census Bridges and his family were still residing in Ponsonby Place, Westminster, and his occupation was still a messenger but with the additional detail of working for the Colonial Office. The 1901 census reveals Frederick Bridges still working as a messenger but this time for the Civil Service. He was living in Royal Road, Southwark. His wife was still living and their son, now 33 years old, is recorded as a watchmaker. Later on in the year, in July, Bridges was examined at the behest of the commissioners of the Chelsea Hospital, and their report presented a grim picture. His disability had "increased considerably since the time of his discharge". It rendered him "completely incapable of earning a livelihood". It added that he "does nothing. Earns nothing". A further detail stated that Bridges "was a messenger at the Board of Trade Standard Department". Following the examination Bridges was awarded a special increase to his pension, giving him an income of 2/- per day.

Frederick Bridges died in unhappy circumstances at 92 Royal Road, Southwark, on 20 March 1903. His occupation was recorded as an "Army Pensioner" and his age was recorded as 84 years. The cause of death was "shock due to self-inflicted wound in throat by razor while in a state of temporary insanity." One of the cheap penny papers gave further details of the tragedy. Under the heading, "Crimean Veteran Heart-broken" it reported, "Royal Road, Newington has been the scene of a pathetic tragedy. A Crimean veteran named Frederick Bridges, who resided there, recently lost his wife, and the funeral was arranged for the end of last week. The old man was completely broken-hearted, and just before the time fixed for the interment, he was found to have committed suicide in an out-house. The funeral was postponed pending the inquest on the husband."



BAKER ONE



Right: Brian Parritt pictured in Hong Kong, 1954. Parritt served for 37 years in the British Army and became a senior intelligence officer. He now regularly talks to schoolchildren about his experiences during the Korean War

# SURVIVING THE HOOK

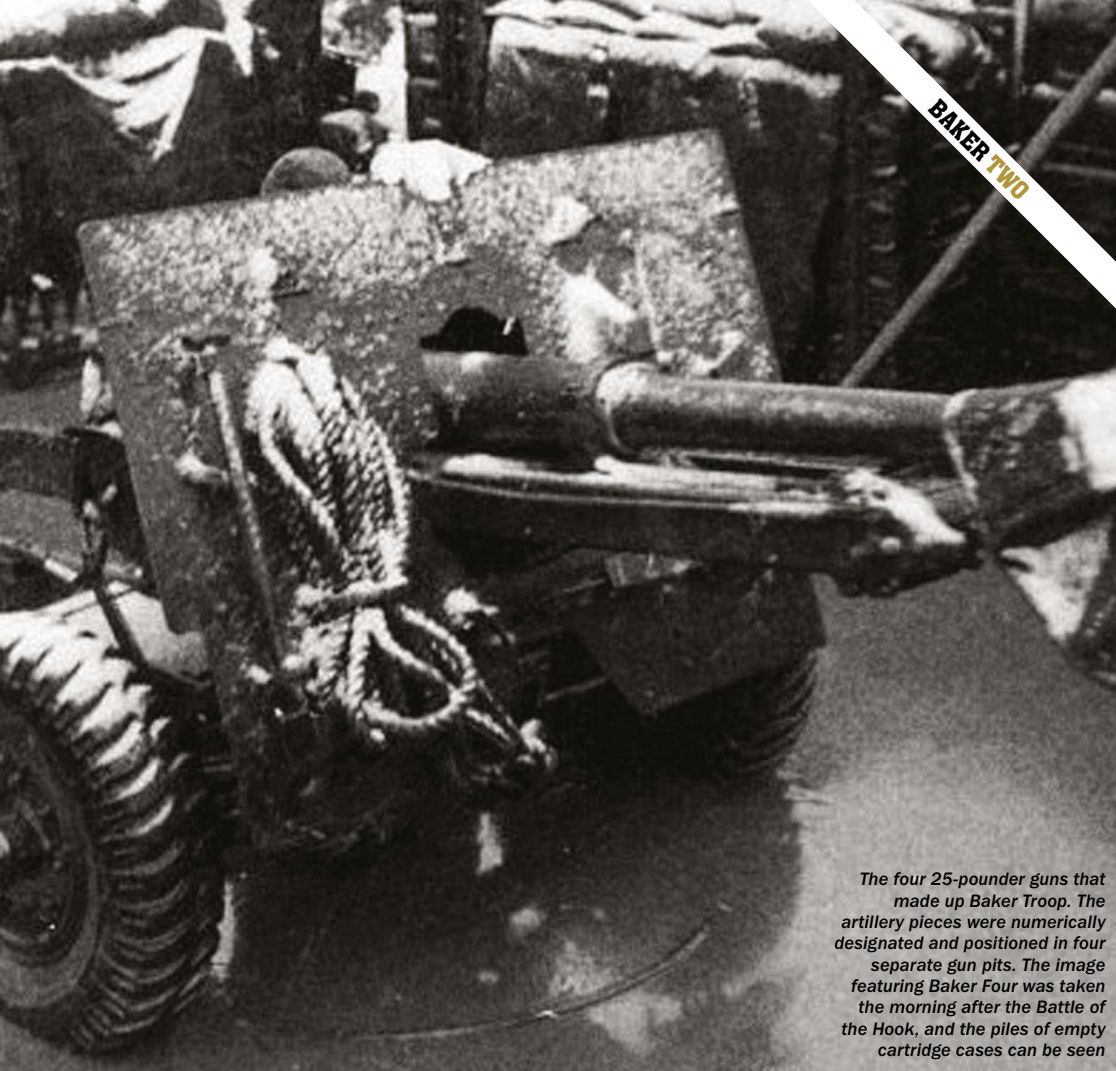
AN INTERVIEW WITH BRIGADIER BRIAN PARRITT CBE

This British veteran tells the gritty story of fighting at the Battle of the Hook during the final days of the Korean War



BAKER THREE





*The four 25-pounder guns that made up Baker Troop. The artillery pieces were numerically designated and positioned in four separate gun pits. The image featuring Baker Four was taken the morning after the Battle of the Hook, and the piles of empty cartridge cases can be seen*



## SURVIVING THE HOOK



WORDS TOM GARNER

**I**t is July 1953 and the Korean War is only days away from ending. Nevertheless, fierce fighting has taken place at a bitterly contested ridge called 'the Hook' between United Nations forces and Chinese soldiers. This position is blocking the Chinese advance to Seoul, and they have been continually beaten back by UN forces, including men from 'Baker Troop', 20th (Field) Regiment, Royal Artillery.

One of the soldiers in Baker Troop is Second Lieutenant Brian Parritt, a young but experienced officer who has been fighting at the Hook since Christmas 1952. Now, on the eve of the armistice, he spots two Chinese soldiers in No-Man's-Land and orders his four guns to fire. However, his order is picked up by the high command, and before Parritt knows what is happening, all of the UN artillery is firing on these two soldiers under his apparent direction.

For Parritt, this was only one of many extreme incidents that took place during his service in Korea. He spent almost his entire wartime service at the Hook and was wounded during this final battle in May 1953. For over seven months Parritt and his comrades in Baker Troop fought against the Chinese and the weather in static conditions that were reminiscent of World War I. Now a retired brigadier, Parritt modestly tells a compelling story of serving in a war that has been wrongly neglected but is now more relevant than ever.

### A family of gunners

Born in British India, Parritt came from a military family, and he was the fourth generation to serve in the Royal Artillery – after his father, grandfather and even a great-grandfather who fought in the Crimean War. With his family history, Parritt was ambitious to become a regular soldier but joined the British Army as a national serviceman. "I joined in November 1949 at Oswestry as a gunner and was an acting, unpaid lance-bombardier, which was the most difficult appointment I had in 37 years! I was trying to control a barrack room of Liverpool guys, but I then passed the necessary board and went to do regular officer training at Sandhurst."

Parritt finished his artillery officer's training in February 1952 and deliberately sought active overseas service. "I knew the 20th Field Regiment was going to Korea so I applied with my friend Shaun Jackson and luckily we got selected." Upon selection, Parritt sailed to Hong Kong in August 1952, where his active deployment was confirmed. "Just after we arrived the colonel called us all on the square and said, 'I've been posted to Korea'. He then paused and said, "and you're all coming with



me!" That's when we knew it was true that we were going to Korea, and there was a hectic period of almost constant training. It wasn't like peacetime, it was training on concentrated fire, plans, drills and deployments."

### Arrival in Korea

Parritt was now a fully commissioned second lieutenant and was posted to Baker Troop, which formed part of 12 (Minden) Field Battery, 20th Field Regiment RA. Baker Troop's distinctive name had its origins in military phonetic spelling and the artillery's command structure: "There are three batteries in each regiment and I was in 12 (Minden) Battery. In each battery there are two troops, and 12 Battery was the senior battery. There was 'Able' and 'Baker' Troop followed by 'Charlie' and 'Delta' in the next battery, etc."

Parritt finally arrived in South Korea at Pusan in December 1952. By this time the war had been raging for over two years, and Parritt's first impressions of Korea were grim as he was transported to the front line: "It was dark and desolate. Pusan was in total ruins but we didn't see much of it. We went out very quickly after two or three days in the train all the way up to the front line. December in Korea is a cold, dark place and you were struck by the desolation and lack of people. It was pretty depressing countryside all the way up until we reached our gun positions."

Parritt's final destination would be a position that saw some of the heaviest fighting in the closing stages of the war, where he would stay until July 1953.

### The Hook

Baker Troop had been posted behind a crescent-shaped ridge that was nicknamed 'The Hook'. Fighting between UN and Communist forces was now largely confined to areas around the 38th Parallel, and the Hook was located near Kaesong. The Communist forces of China and

**"DECEMBER IN KOREA IS A DARK, COLD PLACE AND YOU WERE STRUCK BY THE DESOLATION AND LACK OF PEOPLE. IT WAS PRETTY DEPRESSING COUNTRYSIDE ALL THE WAY UP UNTIL WE REACHED OUR GUN POSITIONS"**

North Korea had failed to overrun South Korea by mid-1952, and although negotiations were being held for an armistice, the war continued. Both sides reinforced their positions and a tactical stalemate ensued, with fighting confined to bloody struggles for strategic hills around the eventual demarcation line. The Hook and another large ridge called 'Hill 355' became particularly contested areas because they were located a few kilometres northwest of the confluence of the Samichon and Imjin rivers. These rivers dominated the ancient invasion route to Seoul, and holding them was therefore vital.

By the time Baker Troop arrived behind the Hook the mobile movements of previous forces had stabilised and become static. "We actually stayed in the same position. There was no name; it was just a field behind the Hook area. We were the third Royal Artillery regiment but the first had gone right up to the Yalu River and back again supporting the Glosters, Ulster Rifles and Northumberland Fusiliers. They were always on the move, but by the time we got there it was a static front line."

Parritt noticed that the area around the Hook eerily resembled the Western Front of World War I: "There was a line of hills, which

**Below:** Brian Parritt (second from left) with the sergeants of Baker Troop. Parritt recalled that it was the sergeants who were the most responsible for the guns' efficiency

**Right:** Captain Bill Miller was killed in action on 2 March 1953. Parritt remembered his death as "a great shame. He had been a captain in Normandy and I was a sproggy little lieutenant, but he was very kind and considerate"







Baker One gun team during a harassing fire mission at the Hook



A pile of Variable Time (VT) shells that were used by Baker Troop. These shells would burst in the air and were highly effective against enemy troops in the open

we occupied with our gunner regiment from behind. On our line of hills, various battalions would come to change occupying the Hook or Hill 355 in turn. Then there was the Samichon River valley and a similar line of hills on the other side, with barbed wire on their side, more barbed wire on our side and mines in the middle. It was totally shell-pocked and barren, and there were no trees because they had all been blown down. It was just a bleak landscape that was similar to pictures of the Somme."

20th Field Regiment relieved 14th Field Regiment RA on Christmas Day 1952 in an "ice bound valley" and Parritt recalled relieving his predecessor: "He gave me a bottle of whisky and said, 'Good luck!'"

## Life on the front line

Baker Troop had inherited four gun pits along with several reinforced "holes in the ground", including a command post and sleeping quarters for the officers and the men. As a second lieutenant, Parritt rotated command of four 25-pounder guns, although he was the junior officer within the troop. "There were three officers: a captain, lieutenant and a second lieutenant who was the troop officer. The guns were each commanded by a sergeant in a detachment of six. There were four gun pits, and the men lived in those little holes all the time. I suppose there were about 40-45 guys there altogether."

Parritt maintains that it was the sergeants who bore the most responsibility for the guns. "Actual responsibility would totally fall on the sergeants. I was sitting in the comparative warmth of the command post and would order, "Target, target." They would have to run out of their 'hoochie' pit, translate the fire orders that were coming over the Tannoy, move the gun into position, elevate it sideways and then give the order to fire."

Baker Troop fired its guns for months at determined Chinese attacks. "It was pretty constant and the Chinese were very aggressive. They kept attacking, and we had a thing called 'DFSOS' [defensive fire SOS]. When the guns weren't firing they were always on a particular position. The OP [Observation Post] officer would go with the company commander and say, "Which is your most vulnerable place?" in the entry leading up to the company position. He would call the DFSOS so that when the guns weren't firing they would always be laid on. For example, if there was an attack during the night he would shout "DFSOS! Bang!" and the guns would be immediately firing."

Despite the static warfare, Baker Troop was kept busy. "There was constant activity. All the battalions and companies were continually doing standing patrols, which would go out fairly close to our wire to stop anything coming, or go on fighting patrols, which would go down past the Samichon into the Chinese lines. There were calls for fire every night, and we also had a thing called 'harassing fire'. At night, two guns from each troop would go forward much closer to the front line, because there would be targets. If you fired at a place at two o'clock, you'd fire at another place at ten past and so on just in the hope that you'd knock off their resupply train. We would have aircraft flying over and they would see movement well back."



Harassing fire tasks were performed in all weathers, and Parritt remembered the extreme cold of the Korean winter even though he lived in slightly warmer conditions than his men in the OP: "I always remember those harassing fire tasks through the winter. The gun numbers [sergeants] used to laugh of course because they were always having to be out and we were in 'the warm', but it wasn't quite like that. We had a paraffin stove to have coffee or tea that would be scalding hot. However, when you put it down to go out and give your fire orders (which would take about two or three minutes) it would have turned solid when you came back!"

The Korean winter was a notorious experience for all troops during the war and even the guns were affected by the cold. "The guns had to be moved all the time because they would freeze into the ground. The gunners would have to keep moving them through the night so that they could be moved."

Nevertheless, despite the freezing weather, Parritt considered himself to be better off than his British predecessors: "When the Argyll and Middlesex Regiments arrived [in Korea] they were in their summer kit, but by the time we arrived in 1952 we had proper kit, so that was a big, big plus. I had a big parka coat and there were fleeces, proper boots, muffs, hats and gloves."

Korea was also a land of contrasts where the seasons could be both hostile and inviting.

"The summer is delightful, and Korea is a beautiful place. In the summer and spring there are flowers and shrubs, and it was very pleasant 'shirts off' weather, but the winter is pretty brutal."

The harsh conditions on the front line meant that soldiers were frequently rotated. "It was pretty unpleasant living on the front line. You can't move, you're eating from rations and you're sleeping in your uniform all the time with boots on. So the OP rotated quite frequently so you could come back for a shower and a beer." As the troop officer, Parritt would spend long hours in the front line until he was replaced by the gun position officer (lieutenant). "The two officers who were in the gun lines would be 'one on, one off' so you would do 12 hours on the line and 12 hours off. But when there was a lot of firing going on you would both be on with your gunners, who would be in the command post with you."

Despite the harsh conditions and gruelling hours Parritt was glad to have the professional opportunity of active service. "It was cold but I was doing what a young officer in the artillery would hope to do. You had four guns. You were either at the gun end controlling or ordering the fire of the guns or you had more excitement sitting in the OP looking over the Chinese lines. So it seemed a natural progression for a young regular officer." Life at the Hook was arduous but rewarding, but the biggest test was still to

come, just as an armistice with the Communist forces was being negotiated.

### Third Battle of the Hook

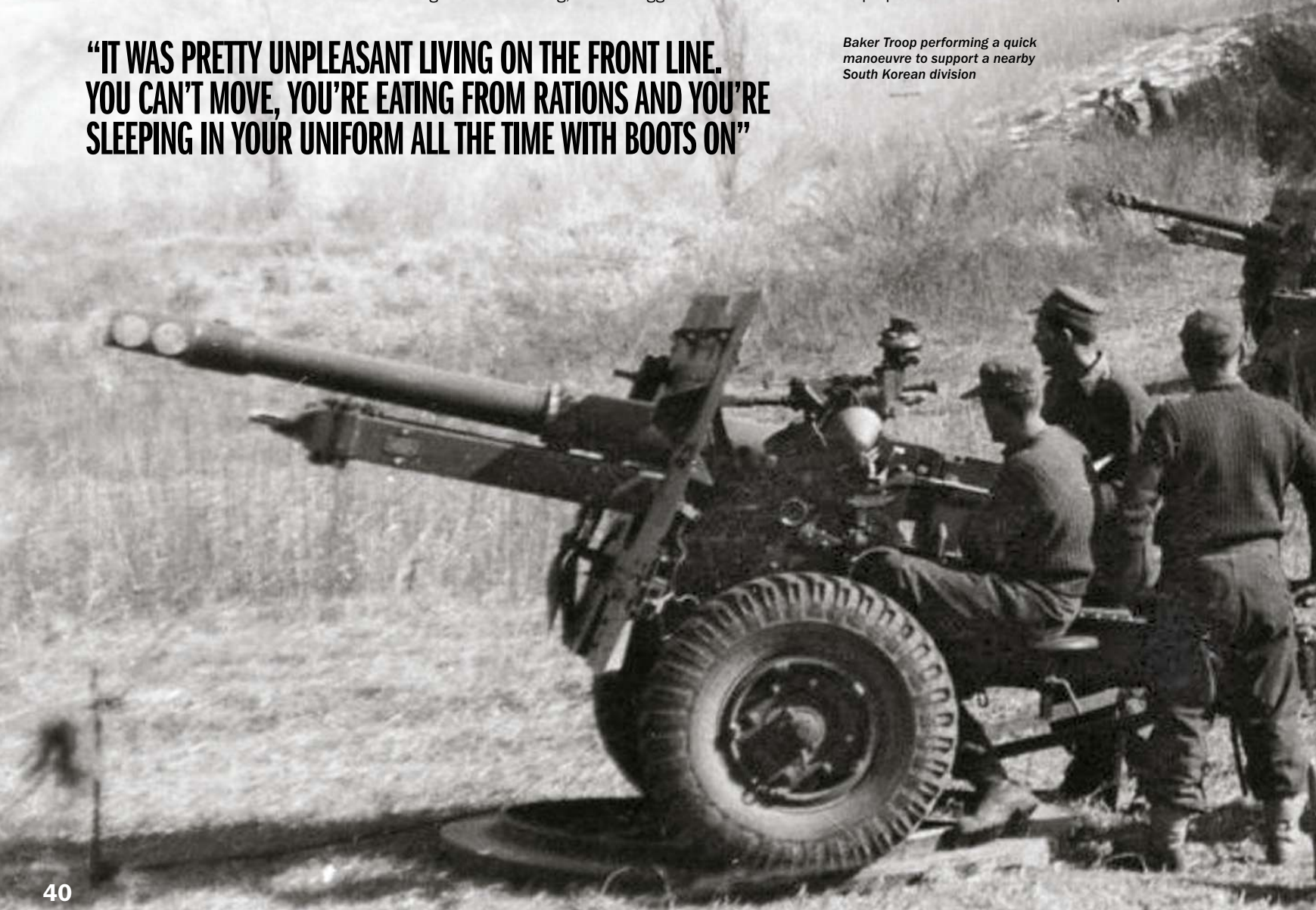
Between 28-29 May 1953 Baker Troop was involved in heavy fighting at what became known as the Battle of the Hook. The battle was in fact the third major engagement at the position, but it was the most intense. Men of First Battalion, Duke of Wellington's Regiment defended the Hook with other British infantry, along with American and Turkish units as well as artillery support, including Baker Troop. Facing them were at least 6,500 Chinese soldiers. The Chinese deliberately decided to attack while peace negotiations were underway. Parritt explains: "This was a period where, although the peace talks were going on, the Chinese and ourselves in various places on the front wanted to get better tactical positions if fighting started again."

On this occasion the Chinese were aiming to strengthen their negotiating hand with a powerful show of force at the Hook. "It wasn't a strategic battle and there was no 'breakthrough' or anything, but there were certain areas that were vulnerable. The Chinese had decided that the Hook was a place they'd like to occupy for the tactical advantage of it, so they threw in attacks to take it."

The UN forces were lucky, as they were able to prepare for battle with information provided

*Baker Troop performing a quick manoeuvre to support a nearby South Korean division*

**"IT WAS PRETTY UNPLEASANT LIVING ON THE FRONT LINE. YOU CAN'T MOVE, YOU'RE EATING FROM RATIONS AND YOU'RE SLEEPING IN YOUR UNIFORM ALL THE TIME WITH BOOTS ON"**





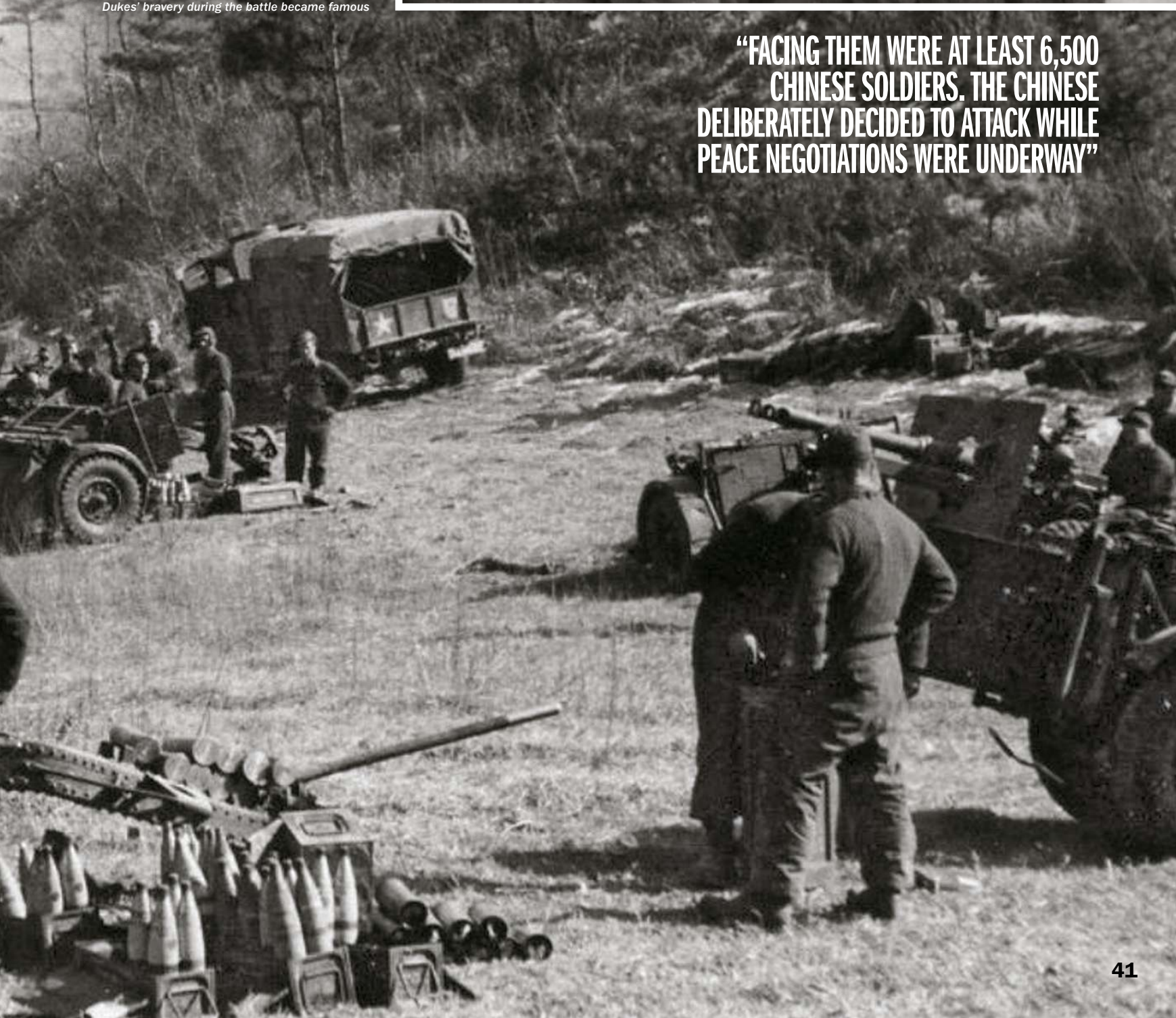


Above: Lieutenant Mervyn Ryder briefing his platoon before a standing patrol for the attack on the Warsaw Caves



Right: Men of the First Battalion, Duke of Wellington's Regiment have a smoke before joining a patrol into No-Man's-Land at the Hook. The Dukes' bravery during the battle became famous

**"FACING THEM WERE AT LEAST 6,500 CHINESE SOLDIERS. THE CHINESE DELIBERATELY DECIDED TO ATTACK WHILE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS WERE UNDERWAY"**





**“IT WAS TOTALLY SHELL-POCKED AND  
BARREN AND THERE WERE NO TREES  
BECAUSE THEY HAD ALL BEEN BLOWN DOWN.  
IT WAS JUST A BLEAK LANDSCAPE THAT WAS  
SIMILAR TO PICTURES OF THE SOMME”**



*Brian Parritt giving fire orders to Baker  
Troop from the UN Thai Battalion after  
the death of Captain Bill Miller*





by a captured Chinese soldier. "The colonel came round on the day and said, 'It's going to happen' because they picked up a prisoner who was brilliant. He knew everything about where he was going and what his signals were. It was far more than a British soldier would know, but he didn't know the timing. Therefore, there were all the intelligence indicators that it was going to happen, but it was just a question of when."

When the battle finally began on 28 May, Baker Troop was ready and deployed a greater rate of fire than usual. "When the Chinese attacked that night I was at the gun end and a lot of the ammunition was rationed. Generally speaking, each target was given three rounds of gunfire, which was the standard. If an attack went on, there would be repeat fire, but the basic was three rounds. On that night it was, 'Three rounds, Fire! Three rounds, Fire! Repeat, Fire!'"

Parritt recalled the professional satisfaction he got from repeated gunfire: "From a gunner's point of view it was wonderful, it was a constant, 'Bang! Bang! Bang!' Baker Four gun fired about 600 rounds plus during the battle. The gun barrels became red-hot and the RASC [Royal Army Service Corps] was splendid bringing up more ammunition."

Baker Troop's guns became so hot during the battle that an amusing but dangerous accident occurred. "A friend of mine from the RASC jumped out of his cab and saw a red-hot barrel. He took out his green army towel, dipped it in water and threw it over the barrel to cool it down, which was a nice thing to do. The trouble was the towel burst into flames! Several weeks later we invited him up to the mess and gave him a new towel and a bottle of sherry!"

Despite the successful firing from the artillery there was tragedy when the Chinese briefly broke through the UN lines. "It was a gunner's dream, but we lost two of our guys from 45 Battery. The Chinese came in just like World War I with hand-to-hand combat, grenades and machine guns. We found them [the gunners] with wounds in their back because they had been



**Above:** Baker Troop's Mobile Command Post. Nicknamed the 'Gin Palace', the vehicle had a Chinese mortar round hanging in front of the engine grill

doing what gunners should be doing, which was looking out of the slit directing fire."

During the night of 28-29 May, 20th Field Regiment fired 13,609 rounds, including almost 2,000 from Baker Troop. Nevertheless, Parritt's own battle took him away from the guns in a daring attack on enemy caves.

### The Warsaw Caves

Because of the intensity of the UN gunfire the Chinese infantry faced a barrage of extreme danger. "To attack up the Hook from their own position the Chinese were exposed and terribly vulnerable. We were firing 'VT' shells that were exploding in the air and splattering down splinters, which were devastating if you were in the open."

To counter this problem the Chinese found a way for their infantry to evade the guns. "The Chinese, who were clever, decided to reduce the distance between when they got out of their trenches and reaching our wire. They were building a series of caves every night much closer to our front line. This was so that when they did attack their vulnerable distance was much reduced. Photographs showed them digging these caves, but they were on the reverse slope so our shells would go over the top. Even our mortars wouldn't do and they were also protected from air attack."

Known as 'Warsaw' after a feature on the Hook, the Chinese caves were a significant threat to the UN positions that could not be ignored. "It was decided to send a company of First Battalion, King's Regiment to attack at night. We would go out along the Samichon with sappers to blow up the caves. This was to prevent them being used for attack purposes."

Parritt was selected by his battery commander as the forward observation officer for the attack company, and he practiced a fire plan and registering targets in the afternoon before the attack. He also selected men to accompany him. "I picked the two gunners who would come with me and rehearsed what we were going to do. Unlike communications nowadays, the wireless set was a great heavy thing with big batteries. I had a coaxial between my microphone to the gunner who was carrying the radio and batteries, while the other guy was carrying reserve batteries. When we were ready we went up to the fighting patrol and the attack started."

The night advance towards the caves meant walking through a minefield, a situation that caused casualties, including Parritt. "My role was to stay with the company commander to order the fire, and we successfully got down through

**"WE WERE FIRING 'VT' SHELLS THAT WERE EXPLODING IN THE AIR AND SPLATTERING DOWN SPLINTERS, WHICH WERE DEVASTATING IF YOU WERE IN THE OPEN"**

## ORDNANCE QF 25-POUNDER

**THE GUNS OF BAKER TROOP WERE HARDY AND ADAPTABLE ARTILLERY PIECES THAT WERE DEPLOYED IN MANY CONFLICTS, FROM WORLD WAR II TO THE IRAQ WAR**

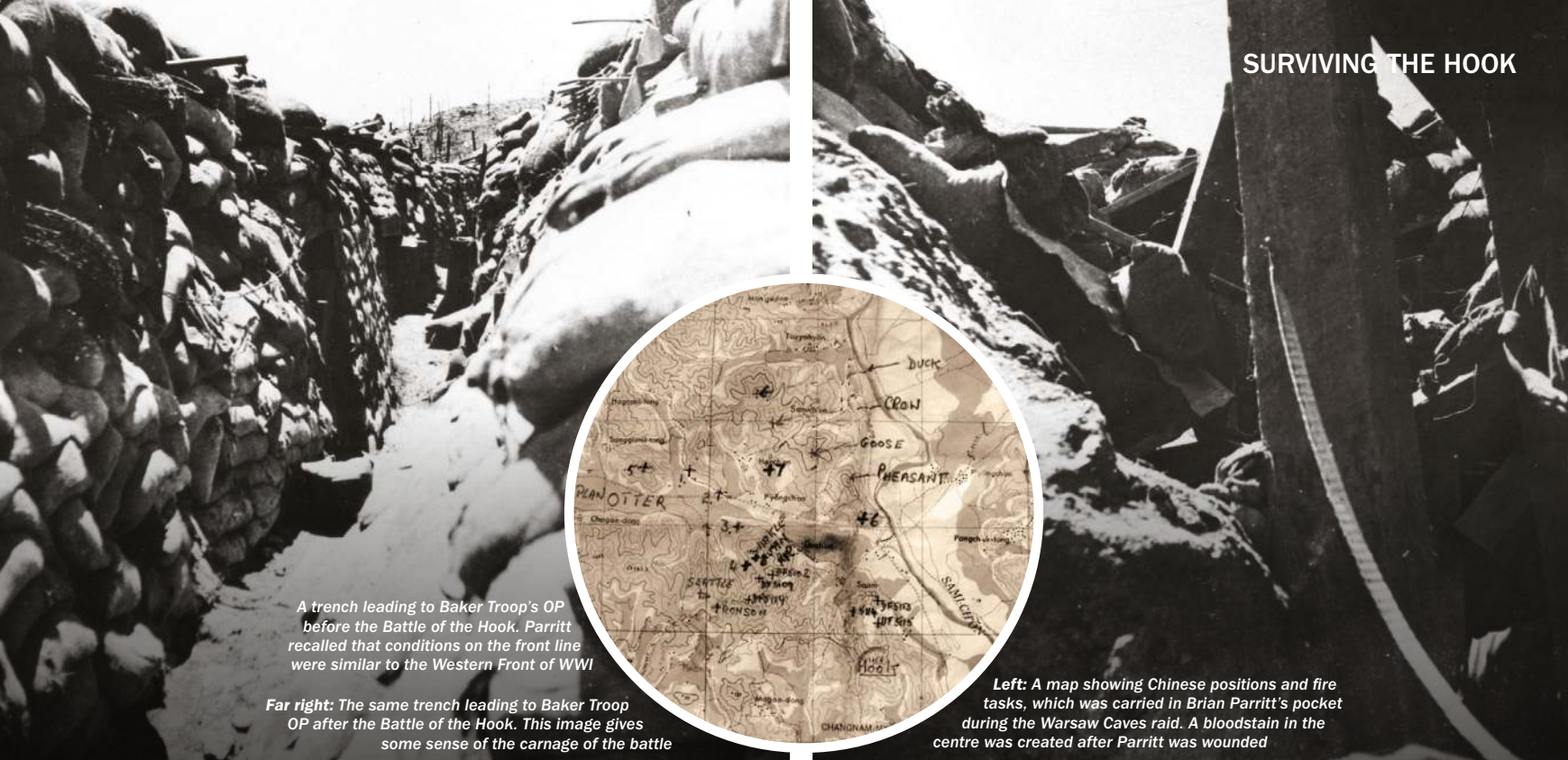
Manufactured by the Royal Ordnance Factory, the QF 25-pounder was a major British artillery piece that combined the dual role of a gun and howitzer. Designed in the 1930s and in service from 1940, the 25-pounder was arguably the most outstanding field piece used by British and Commonwealth forces during World War II. By 1945 over 12,000 had been produced and the gun was known for its durability, easy operation and versatility.

25-pounders could double as an anti-tank gun and be deployed for jungle, airborne or mountain roles. After World War II it saw service in Korea and Malaya among other conflicts and remained the standard British divisional field gun until 1967. It also saw service for many other nations and was in widespread use until at least the mid-1970s and beyond.

*The Ordnance QF 25-pounder gun required a crew of six to operate it and was so effective that it was even being used by the Kurds in northern Iraq in 2003*







A trench leading to Baker Troop's OP before the Battle of the Hook. Parritt recalled that conditions on the front line were similar to the Western Front of WWI

Far right: The same trench leading to Baker Troop OP after the Battle of the Hook. This image gives some sense of the carnage of the battle

Left: A map showing Chinese positions and fire tasks, which was carried in Brian Parritt's pocket during the Warsaw Caves raid. A bloodstain in the centre was created after Parritt was wounded

our wire. There was a great scare at one moment when a deer ran across out of the darkness, but then someone trod on a jumping mine and the Chinese lights went up with incoming fire. I didn't know it at the time but two or three men were killed and I was knocked over."

Parritt had been wounded in the leg, but he wasn't aware of the extent of his injury in the dark. "All I knew was being in absolute darkness. I went on with the company commander, and by that time there was a lot of firing and noise. I could feel something wet on my legs, but I really didn't know what had happened."

Still following his company commander, Parritt observed the sappers who attacked the caves: "There was a big firefight and they pushed the charges into the caves. We'd got Bren and Sten guns and the Chinese had Burp guns and hand grenades. They successfully blew up the caves and then we pulled back. We walked back carrying stretchers, but the system worked. Fire from my battery commander brought down fire on the hill all around us so there was continuous firing, and the tanks gave us support. It was mission accomplished really."

Although not all of the caves had been destroyed, the British had inflicted heavy casualties, and similar Chinese attacks ended. Parritt was officially commended for bravery for his role during the attack, and the UN artillery fired 37,818 shells and 325 rockets during the battle. However, Parritt credits the courage of the infantry regiments for the UN victory: "The battle achieved success and we kept the hill. The Chinese wanted it, and in the end the ceasefire came and they hadn't got it. That was down to the bravery of the Dukes, Black Watch and King's Regiment and so on."

The 'Dukes' in particular successfully repelled many Chinese attacks, and for every British soldier killed at the Hook there were 40-50 Chinese casualties. One brigadier later said, "My God, those Dukes were marvellous. In the whole of the last war I never saw anything like that bombardment. But they held the Hook, as I knew they would."

Parritt was transported to a Norwegian-run hospital at Uijeongbu and recalled that it was similar to a famous film and television series: "It was absolutely similar to *M\*A\*S\*H*. When I see it I think, 'Yeah, that's it', but I certainly never met Hot Lips!"

Although he was hospitalised for almost a month, Parritt considered himself luckier than most: "It was a salutary lesson that it's not all glory when you're seeing other wounded chaps. I was lightly wounded compared to all the others there. There was a young officer opposite to me from the Dukes and he'd been hit. The shrapnel had gone through one cheek, missed his tongue and exited through the other cheek. He wasn't a happy bunny, but I remember a nurse saying to him, 'You're lucky. You're going to have wonderful dimples and the girls will love you!'"

### The UN vs. two soldiers

After his convalescence, Parritt returned to Baker Troop on 29 June 1953 to a situation that was "much the same. We were continuing the static warfare. There was patrolling, Chinese probing, and we did fighting and standing patrols."

Ceasefire talks between the UN and North Korea and China were now at an advanced stage, but the fighting remained heavy along the front line, including at the Hook. Baker Troop was told that armistice talks had been concluded, but on the same day Parritt inadvertently started an extraordinary

incident. "I was in the OP looking down into the Samichon and saw two Chinese guys with white hats laying lines. It was a quiet day, but the war was still going on and I thought, 'Well, why not?' and ordered three rounds of gunfire from the troop. I said, 'Troop target' from our four guns, but to my surprise the commander said over the air, 'Battery target authorised.'"

Parritt's ammunition was often of a poor quality and he did not want shells to fall short on British infantry, but his commanders kept increasing the number of guns on the two Chinese soldiers. "The adjutant then came on the phone and said, 'Regimental target authorised.' This was the 24 regimental guns firing at a target that I had picked. The company commander ran in and said, 'What's going on?' I said, 'I don't know!' I had now added 400 yards [366 metres] beyond the soldiers so the firing was a long way behind them. They were listening to what I had to say, but then I heard, 'Divisional target authorised.' This included the New Zealanders and Americans etc. and I added yet another 400 yards."

Parritt received the ultimate order: "There was then a 'Victor target', which meant that every gun in the UN that was able to reach that area was now firing. As a second lieutenant I was firing more guns than had been fired by the British Army since the crossing of the Rhine! All the UN guns were firing on these two soldiers, but it was a mile [1.6 kilometres] beyond them now and the fire erupted all over the Chinese lines."

Parritt was later told that this huge barrage of firepower was "a show of force to demonstrate a determination that the ceasefire wasn't the UN surrendering or giving in, because no one knew whether the Chinese were going to obey it."

### Armistice

Despite the fact that there was (and remains to this day) no peace treaty, the armistice that ended the Korean War came into effect on 27 July 1953. Parritt recalled that the event was met with trepidation: "It was a very quiet day and the ceasefire was due to start at

**"MY GOD, THOSE DUKES WERE MARVELLOUS. IN THE WHOLE OF THE LAST WAR I NEVER SAW ANYTHING LIKE THAT BOMBARDMENT. BUT THEY HELD THE HOOK"**





## BRITISH KOREAN VETERANS ASSOCIATION

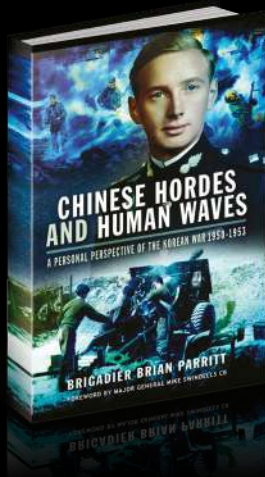


Brian Parritt is the president of the Kent Invicta branch of the British Korean Veterans Association. The association was formed to foster comradeship and is open to all Korean War veterans, relatives and anyone who wishes to support the veterans.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: [WWW.BKVA.CO.UK](http://WWW.BKVA.CO.UK) OR [WWW.BUCKSVOICE.NET/BKVA](http://WWW.BUCKSVOICE.NET/BKVA)

Brian Parritt with two Chinese soldiers in No-Man's-Land on the day after the Korean War armistice. He described this remarkable encounter as being "like Christmas 1914... There wasn't any animosity"

Brian Parritt is the author of *Chinese Hordes and Human Waves. A Personal Perspective of the Korean War 1950-1953*, which is published by Pen & Sword Military. Turn to page 93 for a review.







Above: Brian Parritt (right) celebrating the armistice with platoon commander Lieutenant Mervyn Ryder on top of Baker Troop OP

## “THE BRUTALITY COMES FROM THE GUYS IN THE BACK WHO HAVE A PERCEPTION ABOUT THE ENEMY, WHEREAS THE CHAP ON THE FRONT LINE THINKS, ‘THEY’RE POOR BUGGERS LIKE US!’”

Baker Troop says farewell to fallen soldiers at the end of the Korean War. Parritt has never forgotten the courage and sacrifice of his comrades

10pm. It was totally dark on our front line and what we were looking at was almost satanic. The question all the time was, ‘Do they [the Chinese] know it’s a ceasefire?’”

At 10pm Parritt’s fears seem to be confirmed: “10 o’clock came and there was nothing, but then we heard the thing we hated, which was the ‘Plop, plop’ of their mortars. With their shells you could hear ‘Bang!’ and it would drop, but with a ‘Plop’ it’s in the air and you don’t know where it’s going to land. We heard the ‘Plop’ and thought, ‘Oh bugger, it’s not going to be a ceasefire.’”

Luckily, everyone’s fears were misplaced and Parritt instead witnessed a poignant moment: “But then the whole thing lit up. The Chinese were firing their flares that were red, yellow and white, so they did know it was a ceasefire. At the same time all our guys in front started firing their flares too. Then there was this most evocative thing. When it all went quiet again the Fusiliers and the King’s began to sing *There Will Always Be An England*. It was quite emotional, and the singing spread along the line before it went quiet again.”

The next day, Parritt and his platoon commander decided to walk into what had been No-Man’s-Land and had an unexpected encounter: “We went down into the valley and walked around the bush. Then what do we see? The two Chinese soldiers, the ones that we had been firing at trying to kill! The four of us stopped and we all checked to see that none of us were carrying weapons. They saw that we didn’t have weapons and we saw that they weren’t carrying weapons either so it became cigarettes and smiles!”

Parritt recalled this meeting had moving similarities to a famous event that occurred during World War I: “We were just four ordinary guys, and it was like Christmas 1914. When

soldiers meet it’s interesting. Throughout wars you constantly find that when chaps take a prisoner they give them a cigarette 99 per cent of the time. The brutality comes from the guys in the back who have a perception about the enemy, whereas the chap on the front line thinks, ‘They’re poor buggers like us!’ The moral of it is that soldiers don’t start wars, politicians say you’re at war.”

### Reflections, warnings and remembrance

Baker Troop moved back from the front to the Kansas Line and Parritt helped to repatriate UN prisoners. He recalled the POWs’ happiness when they reached safety: “It was always very emotional. Many were confused and apprehensive because some of them had been prisoners for years. Then suddenly they were free and it was a magic moment for everybody.”

Nevertheless, despite the fact that the Chinese often kept POWs in horrendous conditions Parritt held little animosity for them as soldiers. “You have to say that they were brave, and there’s no doubt that they genuinely believed that they were liberating Korea from American occupation. We certainly didn’t see them as inferior to us in any way, they were just as dangerous.”

Although the armistice ended hostilities, Parritt witnessed the conflict’s ambiguous result: “When I drove down to Uijeongbu at the end of the war with a Korean driver there was a demonstration, and I asked the driver what it was about. He said, ‘They’re protesting about the end of the war because you’ll be going home and they’re left with a divided country.’ So it’s hard to say who won or lost the war because it remains how it was. If you look at it strategically, each side can claim they won. The Chinese

would say they won and we would certainly say that we liberated the south so we won.”

At the time, and for decades afterwards, the Korean War received surprisingly little attention. Parritt explained, “I think it’s because it came so soon after World War II. There was still rationing and there were great privations. There just wasn’t a mood of celebration about another war.”

Nevertheless, in recent months tension on the Korean Peninsula has dramatically escalated thanks to the nuclear ambitions of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and the uncompromising reaction of US President Donald Trump. However, Parritt believes that war will not happen except through human error: “I think it will pan out unless there is an accident. It’s a dangerous situation, but I don’t think Kim Jong Un is planning to nuke Los Angeles. It’s like the stalemate in the Cold War. However, if you play with petrol, somebody might light the match.”

Many of the 60,000 British troops who fought in Korea were national servicemen, and in total over 1,100 soldiers were killed and 2,600 were wounded. For Parritt, it is their sacrifice and courage that he remembers: “Now I’m 86 I can’t help thinking that those men were 19-20 and look what they lost. I know people say this but I feel it. They lost their whole life, their children, wives, everything. People should remember their sacrifice. These were national servicemen; they didn’t volunteer to be in the army. If you’re a regular then you do volunteer for these things, but they were boys out of school who were told to report to go to a war. They were given a few weeks of training and then sent off to Korea, but to them where was Korea? Why were they going? It’s a tribute to them and the way they fought.”



# BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS

With the secession of the Southern states from the Union in 1861, General Winfield Scott put forth the 'Anaconda Plan' calling for a total blockade and encirclement of the South, including the Mississippi River

FORTS JACKSON AND ST PHILIP, NEAR NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA 18-24 APRIL 1862

WORDS MARC DESANTIS



## OPPOSING FORCES



VS



### CONFEDERATE

#### COMMANDERS:

Major General Mansfield Lovell (overall);  
Commander John K. Mitchell (naval forces);  
Major General Johnson Kelly Duncan (Forts Jackson and St Philip)

#### CONFEDERATE FLEET:

25 warships

#### CONFEDERATE FORTS:

Fort Jackson and Fort St Philip

CASUALTIES: 782

### UNION

#### COMMANDERS:

Flag Officer David Glasgow Farragut (overall);  
Commander David Dixon Porter (mortar flotilla)

#### UNION FLEET: 19

warships; 21 mortar schooners; several auxiliary craft

CASUALTIES: 229



**S**tretching some 3,734 kilometres (2,320 miles) north to south, both sides of the American Civil War recognised the Mississippi's strategic importance. If the North could gain control of the river, it would sever the rebellious western states of Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas from the their eastern brethren. Accomplishing this goal was no easy thing: Union naval forces on the river at the outbreak of the war were next to nothing. Further, the entire length of the river would have to be taken in order to open it to the Union, deny passage to the Confederates and enforce an effective blockade. The war for the Mississippi river would be one of not just riverine naval forces but also of fortifications and gun batteries situated on its banks.

A Union river naval force needed to be either built from scratch or converted from existing ships. US Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles approved the formation of a gunboat force to fight for control of the river. As an inland waterway, the US Army claimed jurisdiction over the Mississippi and the many other rivers that fed into it, but the navy sent experienced officers to command the boats and whip them into fighting shape.

The weakest point of the Union naval blockade lay at the Mississippi's mouth as it

empties into the Gulf of Mexico. The area was cut by so many waterways that guarding it was next to impossible, and so any blockade of it was bound to be porous – it was a matter of geography. At New Orleans, the river split into four separate channels, spreading out some 50 kilometres (30 miles) from one side to the other once it reached Gulf waters. It was also well-protected. Some 24 kilometres (15 miles) up from the Gulf entrance the channels converged to form a junction called the Head of Passes. Here, the rebels had their main defensive fortifications: Fort Jackson, on the western bank, and Fort St Philip, positioned on the eastern bank.

The Confederates would not simply allow the Federals to take control of the river without a fight, and they started building their own river fleet. An early Union attempt to cut traffic through the river by taking its blockading squadron inside the river mouth up to the Head of Passes was thwarted when, on 12 October 1861, the converted ironclad ram CSS *Manassas* appeared, rising only one metre (three feet) above the water and armed with a 32-pound gun and a wicked array of below-the-waterline iron spikes. It looked like a floating cigar. *Manassas* rammed into the screw sloop USS *Richmond*, splintering its hull. *Richmond* grounded, along with one of its companions,

the sailing sloop USS *Vincennes*. Its mission accomplished, *Manassas* withdrew, leaving the humiliated Federals alone to refloat their stranded warships. The *Manassas*'s escapade was reported with delight by the press in New Orleans, while the bumbling US Navy was ridiculed by their Northern counterparts.

Despite New Orleans' strategic location, Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy, had not seen fit to do much to defend the city itself, thinking that Forts Jackson and St Philip just below it would be more than sufficient to turn back any Federal attempt to move upriver. The bulk of the city's defences were instead oriented to the north – the direction in which any Union offensive was expected to come, leaving it vulnerable to an attack from the south. While Forts Jackson and St Philip were themselves substantial, if a Union fleet could actually find a way past them, New Orleans would be unable to repel a Federal assault.

Only by holding New Orleans could Southern commercial traffic be stopped with any certainty. Union strategists had been encouraged in their belief that the city was vulnerable to a naval assault. Earlier operations by the US Navy had demonstrated that ships could overcome land fortifications. In August 1861 a US Navy flotilla had bombarded Forts Clark and Hatteras at the

**“THE WAR FOR THE MISSISSIPPI WOULD BE ONE OF NOT JUST RIVERINE NAVAL FORCES BUT ALSO OF FORTIFICATIONS AND GUN BATTERIES SITUATED ON ITS BANKS”**

*The Union screw sloop USS Hartford, lead ship of her class, battles her way past Fort Jackson as it presses up the Mississippi River, 24 April 1862*



Hatteras Inlet on the coast of North Carolina into submission. In November 1861 US Navy ships had forced the surrender of Forts Walker and Beauregard protecting Port Royal, South Carolina, leading to the fall of that city.

The Northern plan for seizing New Orleans was the making of 48-year-old Commander David Dixon Porter of the US Navy. He had spent much of 1861 in command of ships struggling to maintain the blockade of the southern end of the Mississippi. Though nothing in concrete terms had been achieved, Porter had learned much about the river through his talks with local fishermen and his own nocturnal exploratory forays upriver. The information led him to believe that New Orleans could fall to a determined Union naval assault.

Returning to Washington DC in November 1861, Porter disclosed his plan to a pair of United States senators, whose influence soon brought him before Secretary Welles, the Union General-in-Chief George B. McClellan and President Abraham Lincoln himself.

Porter's plan called for a bombardment of Forts Jackson and St Philip by a flotilla of 21 schooners carrying 13-inch mortars – which could loft explosive shells on high trajectories – to be accompanied by other warships that would then make the run past the smothered forts to head up to New Orleans. The ensuing occupation of the city would be undertaken by a large body of soldiers from the US Army.

### Enter David Farragut

With the plan of attack against New Orleans settled, the matter of who would lead the

**“LOVELL THOUGHT THAT THE CONFEDERATE GOVERNMENT WAS ILL-INFORMED ABOUT THE 'REAL SITUATION AT NEW ORLEANS' AND ANTICIPATED A DISASTER SHOULD A NORTHERN BLOW FALL”**

expedition now loomed. Porter was himself too junior to assume overall leadership of the expedition but would be given command of the mortar flotilla. He suggested his own foster-brother, Flag Officer David Glasgow Farragut, for the command. The now 60-year-old Farragut had been adopted by Porter's father and had, at the age of ten, served as a midshipman during the War of 1812. Since then he'd had a good if somewhat unspectacular career. Though a Southerner, he had scorned the secession and had remained loyal to the United States. Porter was instructed by Secretary Welles to sound out Farragut's opinion as to whether New Orleans might fall to the proposed naval assault coming from the Gulf of Mexico. Farragut thought the attack could work and was ready to lead it himself. He was soon given command of the expedition.



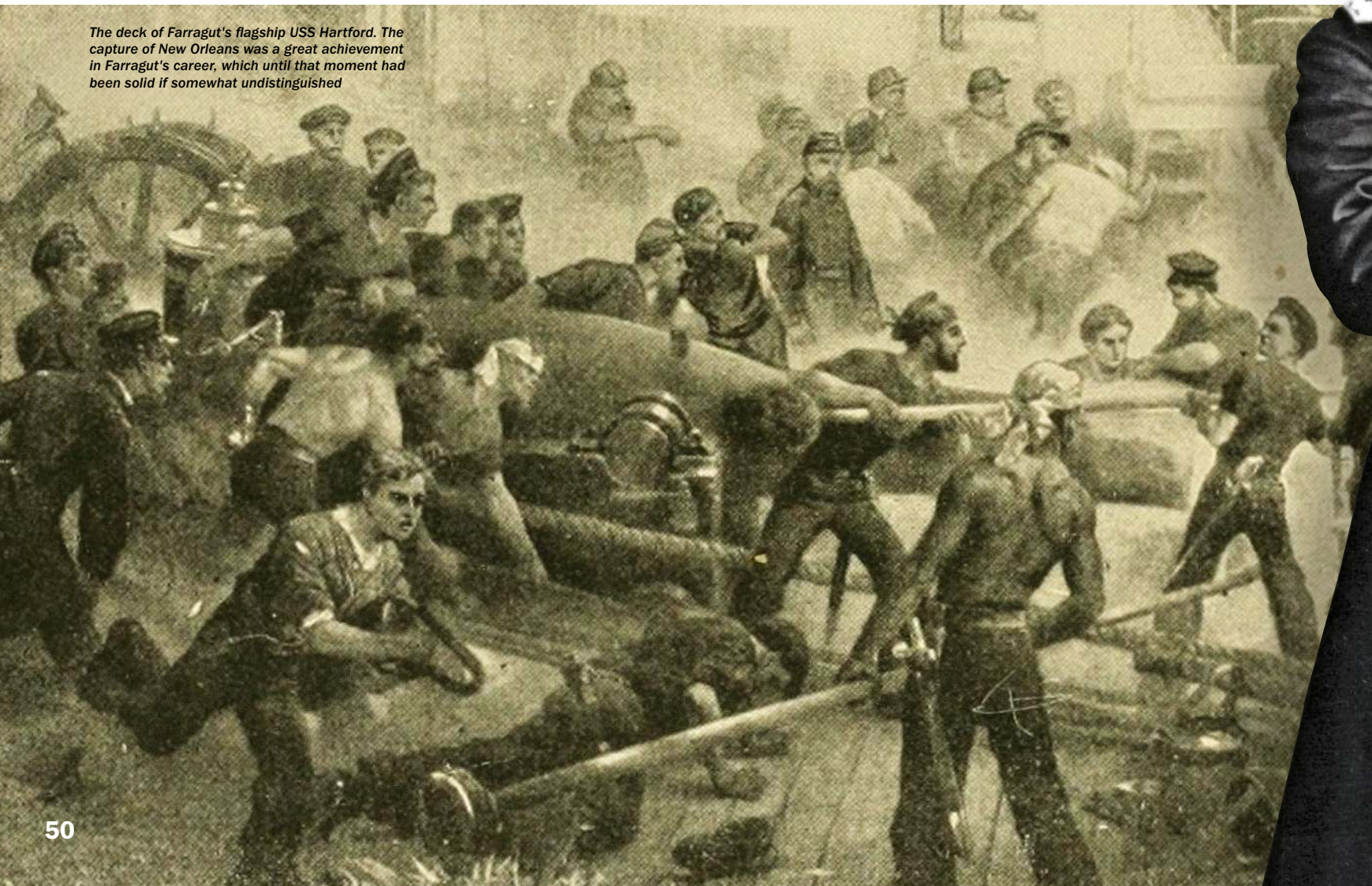
*Above: An overhead plan of Fort Jackson showing the damage that the Union bombardment had inflicted from 18 April to 24 April 1862*

The Union's Gulf Blockading Squadron was cut in two. The East Gulf Blockading Squadron took oversight of the coastline stretching from Cape Canaveral, round the southern tip of Florida, and up to St Andrew Bay. From St Andrew westward to the mouth of the Rio Grande in Texas, Farragut, aboard his flagship, the screw (meaning steam-powered) sloop USS Hartford, would have the command of the West Gulf Blockading Squadron. To keep the true target of his operation secret, rumours were deliberately put out that it was headed for Texas, or to Mobile, Alabama.

### Confederate disorder

The Confederate defence of New Orleans was poorly prepared to meet the coming Union attack. The city itself was held by Major General Mansfield Lovell, but its more distant

*The deck of Farragut's flagship USS Hartford. The capture of New Orleans was a great achievement in Farragut's career, which until that moment had been solid if somewhat undistinguished*



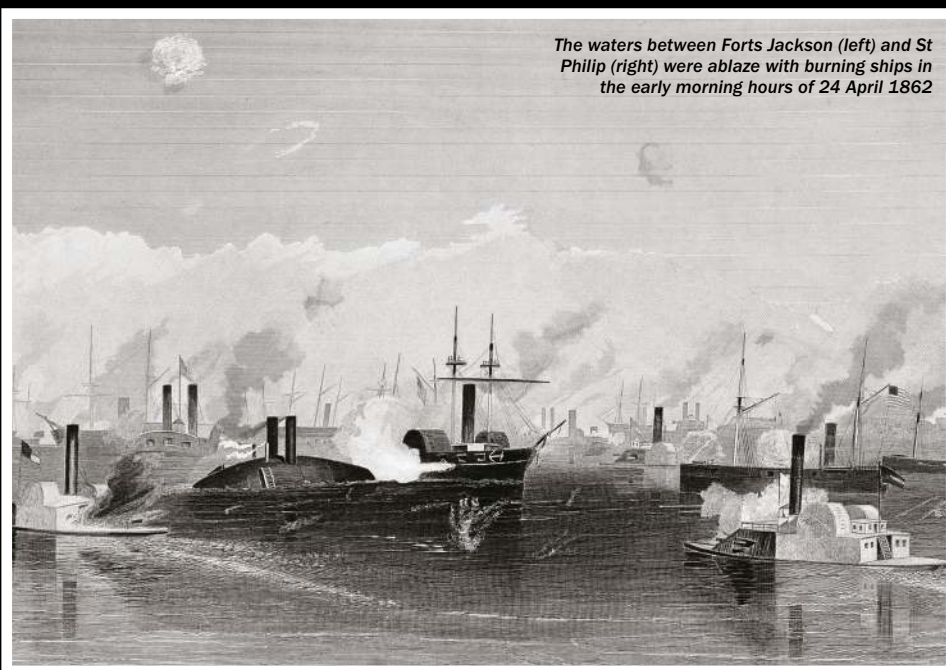


defences, such as Forts Jackson and St Philip, were under the command of another officer, Major General Johnson Kelly Duncan. Lovell thought that the Confederate government was ill-informed about the "real situation at New Orleans" and anticipated a disaster should a Northern blow fall. He was not being dramatic. The 'fleet' tasked with guarding New Orleans was organisationally unsound. Control of the ships around the city, which taken as a group were theoretically formidable, was split between three separate entities. The ironclads CSS Manassas and CSS Louisiana, along with the steam gunboats CSS Jackson and CSS McRae, and a few tugboats, were in the hands of the Confederate Navy. However, Governor Moore and General Quitman, both cottonclad rams, were part of the Louisiana State Navy. Six further vessels – Defiance, Warrior,

Resolute, General Breckenridge, General Lovell and Stonewall Jackson – were held by the Confederate Army's River Defense Fleet.

Neither of the latter two forces would accept orders from the Confederate Navy, thereby immeasurably complicating the issue of operational control of the naval units that would

**Left: Flag Officer David Glasgow Farragut was overall commander of the Union fleet that attacked and captured New Orleans. He became the first admiral of the US Navy**



*The waters between Forts Jackson (left) and St Philip (right) were ablaze with burning ships in the early morning hours of 24 April 1862*

## WARSHIPS OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

### FROM COTTONCLAD RAMS AND TIMBER SIDEWHEELERS TO IRONCLAD GUNBOATS

The American Civil War saw the naval forces of both North and South deploy a plethora of ships and boats of all types, and the New Orleans campaign of April 1862 saw virtually all such vessels plying the waters of the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. Though most ocean-going wooden warships still carried sails, large numbers of frigates and sloops were now also equipped with steam engines and driven through the waves by screw propellers. Sails were employed when cruising, and the steam engines were turned on when battle was in the offing. In addition to the guns sited to fire broadsides, some newer warships were fitted with a pair of large, muzzle-loading 'pivot' guns that could be turned to fire to both port and starboard as required.

With the coming of war, the strategic importance of the Mississippi was immediately apparent, and both sides scrambled to procure warships to contest the control of the vast inland waterway. The earliest efforts of the Union resulted in the so-called 'timberclads', steam-powered sidewheeler gunboats armoured with thick lengths of timber. The first of these were the Lexington, Tyler and Conestoga. Armament varied from four 32-pound cannons in Conestoga to one 32 pounder and six 8-inch smoothbore cannons in Tyler to two 30 pounders and four 8-inch smoothbores in Lexington.

A step up from the timberclads were the 'tinclads'. These Union gunboats were armoured in thin sheets of tin. Converted from flat-bottomed riverboats, their shallow drafts would allow them to patrol the maze of waterways that radiated over several hundred kilometres from the Mississippi. Most tinclads were rather small, displacing under 200 tons, and were armed with whatever ordnance could be obtained. Most were pushed through the water by stern-mounted paddle wheels. Tinclads were typically not given names but instead received individual identification numbers.

Among Confederate forces, another type of gunboat that saw service was the 'cottonclad'. As the name suggests, these vessels were given protection in the form of cotton bales that had been inserted between their outer

superstructure and a false inner bulkhead. The result was a form of composite enamouring. With their bows reinforced, these small and fast steamers made for effective rams.

Ramming as a viable naval tactic had reappeared in the 19th century, having fallen into disuse in most modern navies for a long time. The wind had always been too fickle to make rams effective, but the advent of steam power brought ramming back into favour. Unfettered from reliance on the wind, Union rams were converted from riverboats. Their wooden bows were strongly reinforced, as were their hulls, so as to better absorb the tremendous impact of a ramming strike. Armaments on such ships were very limited – perhaps just one or two guns were mounted. Major vessels included the Union's sidewheelers Queen of the West and Switzerland. Their relatively high speed – around 12 knots – made their ramming attacks formidable.

Ironclads – driven by steam, covered in iron plates, and perhaps the iconic vessels of the war – were employed both at sea and on the Mississippi. Famous ironclads included the USS Monitor and the CSS Virginia, the former USS Merrimack, which dueled to a standstill at Hampton Roads in 1862. Ironclads were also used on the river itself, with many being converted from existing river craft, while others were purpose-built. The low and squat boats of the North's City class were nicknamed 'Pook's Turtles' after their designer. The cannon-armed vessels were 53 metres (175 feet) long, 16 metres (51 feet) wide, and were covered in 6.4-centimetre (2.5-inch) thick iron plates, but drew only 1.8 metres (six feet) of water, making them usable in the shallows of the Mississippi and its tributaries.

**“BOTH SIDES SCRAMBLED TO PROCURE WARSHIPS TO CONTEST THE CONTROL OF THE VAST INLAND WATERWAY”**



have to resist Farragut's attack. The widely held expectation among the Confederate forces that they had most to fear from a descent from the north by Federal river forces did not help them to prepare for the Union's assault from the south either.

### On to New Orleans

Farragut arrived at Ship Island in the Gulf of Mexico, the jump-off point for the operation, on 20 February, where he linked up with 18,000 US Army soldiers under the command of Major General Benjamin F. Butler. These were the troops that would be tasked with seizing the city. Farragut's fleet was substantial. In addition to Hartford, he had its sister ships USS Brooklyn, USS Pensacola and USS Richmond. These were joined by the steam frigate USS Colorado, the steam corvettes USS Iroquois and USS Oneida, the ancient sidewheeler frigate USS Mississippi and the converted packet steamer USS Varuna. Supplementing these larger units were 11 steam gunboats and a congeries of auxiliary vessels. He was met by Porter with his mortar boat flotilla at Ship Island in early March.

News now came to Farragut that Forts Henry and Donelson were in Union hands, and that Union river gunboats had advanced south down to Island No. 10. He also knew that the Southerners were building two big ironclads, Louisiana and Mississippi, on the river and that, when completed, they would be deadly to the wooden ships in his own fleet. It would be better to move before they were operational, and he decided to take his ships into the river.

Beginning on 7 March, simply getting the ships over the shallows proved a laborious chore. Tugs were needed to pull many of them over the submerged sandbars in the passes that had silted up higher due to the reduction of river traffic that followed the coming of the war. The mortar ships and gunboats got through the Pass à l'Outre without too much fuss, but the bigger ships could not manage it. Farragut tried instead the South West Pass. Hartford, Brooklyn and Richmond made it over relatively easily. USS Pensacola and USS Mississippi eventually were able to cross, but only after a struggle lasting eleven days. The giant frigate USS Colorado drew so much water that it could not be yanked across, no matter how much weight was removed from it. Farragut took with him all of her guns and its better sailors and stationed it outside the South West Pass as a reserve ship. The fleet was not fully across until 8 April.

On 13 April the tug Sachem moved north to reconnoitre Confederate positions, returning with precise ranges for Porter and his mortar boats. It was time for the bombardment to begin. The mortar schooners, led by Porter in Harriet Lane, pushed up the 30 kilometres (20 miles) from the Head of Passes to the forts. Starting on 18 April, the mortars began lobbing shells against Fort Jackson and Fort St Philip, with each vessel hurling a 13-inch shell aloft every ten minutes. Their aim was largely accurate, thanks to the skill of the mortar-men and the information provided by Sachem. The forts returned fire ineffectually. The Union bombardment continued for ten hours, at the end of which Fort Jackson was ablaze. The

# BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS

MISSISSIPPI RIVER

BAY

MARSH

## 07 MANASSAS STRIKES AGAIN... AND AGAIN

Brooklyn makes it upriver past Fort St Philip but is attacked and rammed by CSS Manassas. Fortunately, the improvised chain mail armour hanging over its side prevents crippling damage and it leaves Manassas behind it. After a brief lull, Manassas returns to the fight further upriver, but is run off by USS Mississippi, which hammers the pesky Confederate ram with gunfire. Manassas grounds ashore and is set on fire by its commander.

## 08 ON TO NEW ORLEANS

With the bulk of his fleet past the line of the forts, Farragut heads further up the Mississippi towards New Orleans, which he reaches the next day. The city is undefended. Forts Jackson and St Philip capitulate two days later.

## 06 BLUE DIVISION

Aboard Hartford, Farragut pushes upriver. Brooklyn is caught in the remains of the hulk line and is struck by heavy Confederate gunfire. The Confederate tug Mosher is destroyed by Hartford, but not before it places a blazing fire raft against the Union screw sloop. Farragut's men fight the fire and soon Hartford is past the forts.

BAY

A. BARGES  
B. McRAE  
C. LOUISIANA  
D. FIRE BARGES  
E. MANASSAS  
F. SCHOONER RAFT

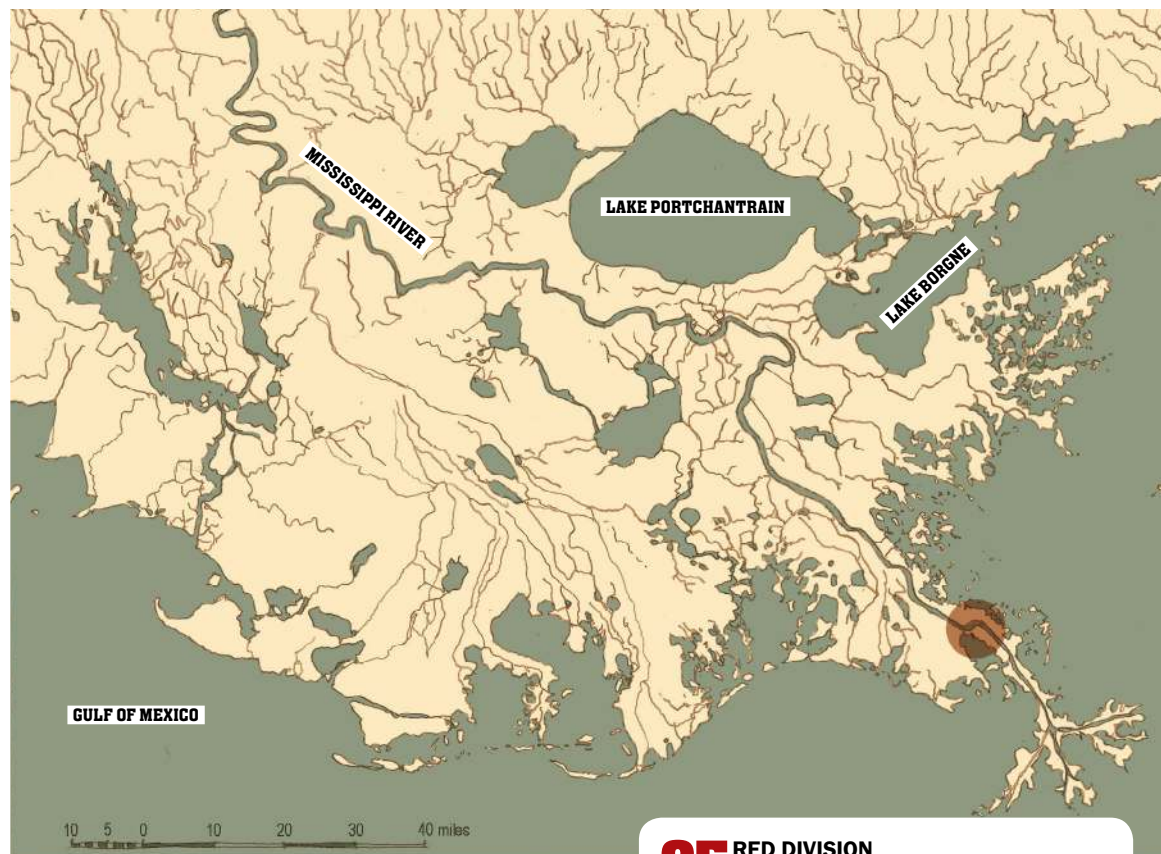


Map: Rocio Espin



**04 HULK LINE**

Across the broad Mississippi the Confederate defenders have chained together eight dismantled schooner hulks to prevent an easy sortie upriver by the Union fleet. Before Farragut orders his advance, a team of Federal seamen goes forward, under cover of night, and hacks apart the chains that bind the ships together. Fire rafts are launched by the Confederates at night but they prove to be mere nuisances to the well-prepared Federals.

**05 RED DIVISION**

Farragut signals a general advance by the ships in his fleet. Cayuga takes the lead and is hit hard. Pensacola veers off course. Oneida rams an enemy ship and then takes up position, firing at targets of opportunity. Varuna knocks out four Confederate ships before it is rammed by Governor Moore. It duels furiously with Governor Moore, is rammed by CSS Stonewall Jackson, and then reduces Jackson to a flaming wreck with cannon fire. Both Varuna and Governor Moore are forced ashore by sustained battle damage. USS Mississippi is rammed by CSS Manassas.

**FORT ST. PHILIP****CONFEDERATE RIVER FLEET****FORT JACKSON****03 THE REBEL NAVY WAITS**

Union fleet commander David Glasgow Farragut realises that he can't wait for the mortar ships to force the surrender of the forts and decides he must run the gauntlet past them so that he may continue on to New Orleans. Waiting for him, just upriver of the forts, is a disorganised but dangerous collection of Confederate warships, including Manassas, Stonewall Jackson and the incomplete ironclad, Louisiana.

**MARSH****01 FORT JACKSON AND FORT ST PHILIP**

Neither Jackson nor St Philip can be considered modern forts. Fort Jackson has been sinking into the mud of the Mississippi Delta for some time and is perennially flooded, requiring constant pumping to keep its magazines dry. St Philip is no better, being an elderly fort originally of Spanish construction. Its guns are unprotected and vulnerable to the plunging fire of Union mortar bombs. The bulk of the guns in both forts are also outdated, being old-fashioned 32 pounders with short ranges.

**EXTREME RANGE OF FORT FIRE****UNION MORTAR FLEET****02 BOMBARDMENT BEGINS**

21 mortar schooners under Commander David Dixon Porter begin the bombardment of Fort Jackson. They pound the fort with close to 3,000 13-inch shells on the first day alone, and continue the barrage for the next few nights. Though much damage is done, Fort Jackson does not succumb.



pummelling ceased with the coming of night, and then resumed the next morning, but at a reduced rate of one shell every 30 minutes. Porter's ammunition stocks had begun to run low, and he now understood that his original estimate, which had called for 48 hours to reduce both forts, had been wildly optimistic.

In preparation for the general assault, Farragut had every bit of superfluous equipment removed from his ships. Even their masts were reduced so that they could carry only the most limited of sail. His crews daubed their ships' sides with mud to make them less visible in the hours of darkness and their decks were painted white to make their weapons easier to see at night. About the midships they hung heavy anchor chains as a kind of rudimentary 'chain mail' armour to protect the boilers behind them. "The day is at hand," Farragut told his men drily, "when you will be called upon to meet the enemy in the worst form of our profession."

The Confederates were of course certain that Farragut was on his way and had hastily improved their defences. Across the Mississippi they had chained eight dismantled schooner hulks in a row. On the shore they had readied fire rafts to be let loose downstream at the oncoming Federals.

## "HIS CREWS DAUBED THEIR SHIPS' SIDES WITH MUD TO MAKE THEM LESS VISIBLE IN THE HOURS OF DARKNESS AND THEIR DECKS WERE PAINTED WHITE TO MAKE THEIR WEAPONS EASIER TO SEE AT NIGHT"

Ships had also arrived to join the fight. CSS Manassas had come, along with the cottonclad ram CSS Stonewall Jackson. The long-awaited ironclad Louisiana also made its appearance, having been towed to a position just to the north of Fort St Philip, outside of the range of Union mortar ships. But it was a paper tiger really, with non-functional engines and guns that were not fully operational.

The night hours were enlivened by the release of the fire rafts. Flames leapt skyward as the rafts, piled with flammable materials, drifted downriver. Farragut, however, had

anticipated their use, and they were easily caught by his numerous auxiliary boats and redirected to the river's banks, where they consumed themselves without effect.

But here remained the obstacle of the hulk line across the river. These were hacked apart by a daring team of Union seamen in three gunboats while under heavy enemy fire. With the line severed, the Confederates towed Louisiana further downstream, anchoring it closer to Fort St Philip. It was still wholly unfit for real combat, and it was to be used only as a floating battery. This decision to hold it back upstream was not welcomed by all. The forts' commander, General Duncan, asked the Confederate Navy commander, John K. Mitchell, to move Louisiana even further south, past the forts to the now-tattered hulk line, where he thought it would be of more use. Mitchell however declined, on the grounds that if he did so, no further work could be carried out on the ship.

This was not the only example of friction in the Confederate defences. Even at this late hour, the Confederate Army's River Defense Fleet still steadfastly refused to accept orders from Mitchell, who had now taken command of the Louisiana State Navy ships in addition to those of the Confederate Navy. The army rivermen would fight, but only at their own direction, and they turned down a request to bring their cottonclad rams down to the hulk line to do battle where they were sorely needed.

The battering from the mortar boats continued for several more days, with no sign that Fort Jackson was ready to capitulate. Farragut decided that he would have to chance a run past the forts even though they had not been put out of action. At 2.00am on the morning of 24 April, the mortar barrage slackened and a pair of red lanterns on USS Hartford's mast gleamed, indicating that the Union fleet was to steam onward. The vanguard, Red division, under Captain Theodorus Bailey in the gunboat Cayuga and comprised of Pensacola, Mississippi, Oneida, Varuna, Katahdin, Kineo and Wissahickon, led the slow advance in the Stygian darkness. Behind them came the Blue division of Hartford, Brooklyn and Richmond. Farragut was high above in his flagship's rigging, getting a better look of the unfolding night scene, all the while shouting orders to his sailors below. He came down, after being begged to do so, only just in time to avoid being hit by a Confederate shell. Taking up the rear, in the third division under Chief of Staff Henry Bell, were Iroquois and five gunboats.

Ahead, Cayuga was struck all along its length by shells from Fort St Philip. It pushed on to engage Confederate warships, set afire an enemy vessel and forced it ashore. Cayuga's companions Oneida and Varuna moved forward. An enemy ship crossed Oneida's bow, and with every ounce of speed it could muster, Oneida rammed it, afterwards firing its guns at any enemy in range.

Varuna, on its own, took out four Confederate ships, and was then engaged by the cottonclad Governor Moore of the Louisiana State Navy. Governor Moore approached Varuna from behind and both ships let loose with a hellstorm of fire. The Confederate ram came so close to Varuna that it could not depress

## TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES

### ADVANCES TO CANNONS, SHIPS AND MUNITIONS CHANGED THE BALANCE OF POWER

The fall of the Hatteras and Port Royal forts to solely naval elements had been made much easier by several technical developments earlier in the century. In the days of sail, the advantage in any contest between a ship and a land fort had been with the guns ashore. A sailing man o'war would have been compelled by its reliance on wind for movement to remain in place to duel with a fort's guns, since manoeuvring while under sail and having to contend with shifts in the wind, currents and changes in tide, all while shooting at the shore, was very tricky. Staying put was also risky, as the wooden ship became increasingly vulnerable to being hit the longer it was there and the shore gunners had found the range. A steam-powered vessel, in contrast, could cruise by the enemy fort at a distance of more than 1.5 kilometres (one mile), firing as it did so, exit the range of enemy shore guns, and then turn around to have another go. As constantly moving targets, the steam ships were hard for Confederate shore gunners to accurately attack.

The size of shipborne artillery had also increased, as had its range. Most prominent among these were the

Dahlgren guns – enormous smoothbore pieces with extra reinforcement around the chamber to enable them to withstand the pressure of powerful charges. Artillery had become more accurate too. Parrot guns were rifled cannons able to hurl a projectile over longer distances and with better accuracy than a smoothbore gun. The key was the rifling. These were grooves cut inside the barrel of the gun that imparted a spin to the fleeing projectile that made it fly further as well as truer.

There was another advance besides. Once these projectiles had hit their targets, they were more lethal because of the incorporation of explosive charges that detonated when they struck home. Old-style cannonballs used by warships in the age of sail were solid, and when they smashed into earthen defences would typically be absorbed without much trouble. Exploding shells, on the other hand, could tear apart such defences. Altogether, steam engines, bigger, more accurate guns and exploding shells made a naval force a much more formidable opponent for land fortifications.



A 13-inch mortar of the type used by Commander David Porter's mortar ships to bombard the Confederate forts





*Above: Union ships risk the fire of the Confederate forts as they move upriver*

its bow gun enough to fire at the Union craft. Frustrated and desperate, its commander, Lieutenant Beverly Kennon, ordered his gun to fire through his own ship's hull at Varuna.

Governor Moore next rammed Varuna, and then once again for good measure. Coming up, CSS Stonewall Jackson also rammed Varuna. When Stonewall Jackson backed off to make another ramming attack, Varuna used the breathing space to fill its tormentor with five eight-inch shells, and this pounding forced the Confederate ship ashore in flames. But Varuna was by now also sinking, and its captain brought it to the safety of the riverbank. Governor Moore, in the meantime, was so badly damaged by the fire from other Union warships that it too was forced ashore, and Kennon set Governor Moore ablaze to keep it out of the enemy's hands.

Elsewhere, Pensacola had gotten lost in the darkness and had come perilously close to Fort St Philip before veering off to the western side of the river. The elderly USS Mississippi was behind it, sidewheels pounding. Off the port bow appeared a low silhouette, shaped like a cigar. It was the infamous ram CSS Manassas, under Lieutenant Alexander Warley, come to do battle for the passage of the river. He rammed Mississippi, but only inflicted a glancing hit, which nonetheless managed to tear a gaping hole in the old sidewheeler. The Union ship shuddered and began to list, but then quickly righted itself. Manassas headed off to find another victim.

## **"THE VENGEFUL STEAM FRIGATE MISSISSIPPI, WHICH HAD ALSO MADE IT PAST THE FORTS, WAS LOOKING FOR A REMATCH"**

Back with the Blue division, the screw sloop Brooklyn had become entangled in the broken remnants of the hulk line. Brooklyn finally extricated itself, but only after having taken heavy fire from the forts. Once past Fort St Philip, Brooklyn met another enemy. Manassas had reappeared, firing its single cannon at Brooklyn and then ramming the Union ship. With its gun ruined in the collision, Warley backed up the Manassas for another strike, but his first attack had done less damage than hoped. The chains hung over the side of Brooklyn had protected it, and it steamed onwards, leaving Manassas in its wake.

Aboard Hartford, Farragut struggled to guide his ships past the forts, but he could see very little in the death shroud of smoke that hung over the battle. At around 4.15am, a Confederate tug, Mosher, had nudged a fire raft against Hartford's portside hull. Hartford's guns annihilated the impudent little boat, but the screw sloop was now itself aflame. Fire parties worked furiously to fight the blaze, and the flagship continued to move ahead. Farragut noticed that Confederate fire had begun to lessen. Hartford was, at last, past the forts, but was not altogether safe. Lieutenant Warley in Manassas had found them. The vengeful steam frigate Mississippi, which had also made it past the forts, was looking for

a rematch, but its captain felt the need to ask for permission to attack. Farragut, once again aloft in the rigging of Hartford, shouted the order himself through a trumpet. "Run down the ram!"

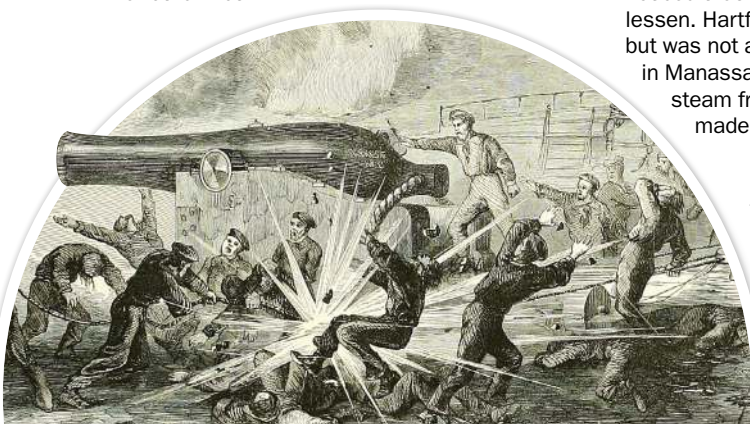
Mississippi fired its guns twice at Manassas, which had been so damaged in its earlier battles that it could hardly keep up the fight. Warley grounded his ship on the riverbank, got his crew off, and set his stricken ship alight, even as the pursuing Mississippi continued to rake its hull with grapeshot.

Almost all of Farragut's ships managed to find a way past the forts, which quit their own firing at about 5.30am. His fleet arrived at the defenceless New Orleans the next day, on 25 April. The forts held out for another two days, under bombardment by the mortar ships, until they too surrendered on 27 April. By 1 May, Butler's US Army troops had come up and had begun the occupation of the city. Commander Mitchell set CSS Louisiana alight and cast it adrift, with five tons of powder aboard, allowing it to float down the river, drifting past where General Duncan was right then signing surrender terms with Porter. The half-built ironclad, so unfulfilled in its potential – much like the entirety of the Confederate defence of New Orleans – blew up.

## **Aftermath**

One historian has gone so far as to say that the fall of New Orleans was "the night the war was lost". Even if that summary is a bit of an exaggeration, the capture of the South's biggest port was surely an awful loss to the Southern cause, as the flow of traffic out of the river was now completely in Northern hands. The capture of Vicksburg the next year, in July 1863, was the culminating act in the Union's seizure of full control over the Mississippi, and with it, the Confederacy had effectively been cut in half.

*Left: Fire from Fort Jackson strikes the gunboat Iroquois, causing devastation to the crew. Despite the mortar attacks on the forts, they were still a threat to the Union ships*





# 1918 THE SPRING OFFENSIVE

## PART I

On 21 March, the German army spectacularly broke the deadlock of the Western Front. The Allies' dynamic response ensured that the line was restored within a fortnight

WORDS PROFESSOR WILLIAM PHILPOTT

**O**n 20 March 1918 General Marie-Émile Fayolle, who was to lead the Allied reserves that engaged and halted 'Operation Michael', the first strike of the German 1918 Spring Offensive, noted in his diary, "More and more it seems to be confirmed that the Boche will not attack." In their shattering offensive that commenced the next morning, General Erich Ludendorff's armies would secure that elusive and momentary advantage essential to battlefield victory – surprise.

Several other factors facilitated their early success. First, it was a matter of scale: an attack with 74 infantry divisions along an 80-kilometre (50-mile) front was the largest seen on the Western Front since the battles of 1914. Second, it was a result of method: overwhelming artillery fire coordinated with dynamic infantry tactics to shatter the enemy's forward defences. Third, there was an element of good fortune: the British lines, against which the first blow fell, were held more thinly than other sectors of the front, and an early morning mist screened the first waves of attacking infantry as they left their trenches to engage the barrage-numbered British defenders.

The blow was a shock to the Allies: "It's the final battle," Fayolle noted, somewhat prematurely, on 22 March. But the German army's tactical prowess masked operational weaknesses that the Allies could exploit once they had organised to contain and counterattack. A week of hasty reorganisation followed, but within a fortnight the immediate danger had passed.

Ludendorff was taking advantage of a brief window of opportunity brought about by the withdrawal of Bolshevik Russia from the war

to try to win a military victory before Allied superiority in resources and manpower, which had started to tell from 1916, overwhelmed Germany. In the spring, before American troops started to arrive in large numbers, he could bring veteran troops from the Eastern Front that would give Germany superiority in forces on the Western Front for the first time. Ludendorff hoped that he might use these to shatter the wearying Anglo-French coalition. The winter lull in fighting enabled him to plan an ambitious series of battles, the 'Kaiserschlacht' or 'Kaiser's battle', although there appeared to be no overall purpose to the Spring Offensive beyond a growing desire to end the war quickly before exhaustion dragged Germany and her allies down.

### The offensive begins

The attack fell on the front of the British Fifth Army commanded by General Hubert Gough opposite St Quentin. Five hours of intensive hurricane bombardment from over 6,500 guns, the greatest concentration of German artillery yet seen in the west, was designed to paralyse the defence, cutting communications and pulverising centres of resistance. Second Lieutenant Gilbert Laithwaite noted that "front and support systems were deluged with thousands of gas shells, mixed with high explosives: communications trenches and junctions barraged, all avenues of approach for reinforcing troops blocked by a chain of fire. Simultaneously all rear Headquarters, transport lines, and heavy guns... were subjected to a heavy bombardment from long-range... guns."

The Allies responded in kind. "I have never seen such a concentration: overhead was a most extraordinary hissing sound – our shells

**"THE WINTER LULL IN FIGHTING ENABLED HIM TO PLAN AN AMBITIOUS SERIES OF BATTLES"**



*German storm troops waiting  
to assault British lines on the  
morning of 21 March 1918*





whistling over without any semblance of a break; his guns replying vigorously... The noise was so great, and the whole thing so immense, that one's nerves steadied automatically." Laithwaite and his comrades prepared to resist the coming onslaught as best they could. "A last message came through from the observation post – 'Enemy coming over on our right.'... We all jumped up, shook hands and wished good luck. We saw little hope of finishing the morning."

The Allies had anticipated an attack and had tried to organise a 'defence in depth' based on German defensive principles, which utilised a system of mutually supporting strongpoints to break up the enemy's attack before counterattacking with local reserves. However, Fifth Army lacked the forces both to hold their 'battle zone' and to counterattack – Gough had only 12 infantry and three cavalry divisions to hold a 69-kilometre (43-mile) front – especially as the breakdown in communications made it very difficult to control the battle. Gough was to be blamed for the defeat and sacked, although in practice no commander could have mounted an effective riposte in the circumstances.

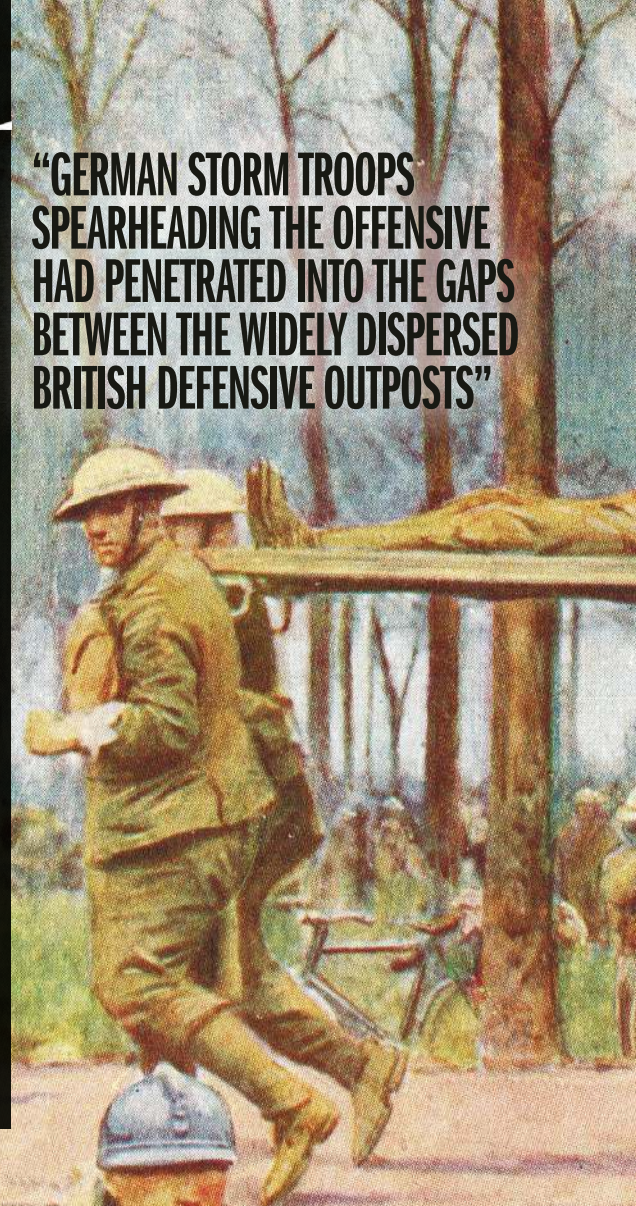
Masked by the mist, German storm troops spearheading the offensive had penetrated into the gaps between the widely dispersed British defensive outposts, leaving them isolated and vulnerable to the follow-up divisions tasked with mopping up British resistance. Trapped garrisons generally fought stubbornly until their ammunition ran out and they were forced to surrender – the advance was no walkover. It

took two days for the Germans to fight their way through the Fifth Army's defensive zone, and meanwhile Gough organised his rear-area troops and stragglers to defend a succession of improvised defensive positions to slow the enemy's advance. Fifth Army was obliged to retreat, but it was no rout, and heavy casualties were inflicted on the pursuing enemy in a series of delaying actions and local counterattacks.

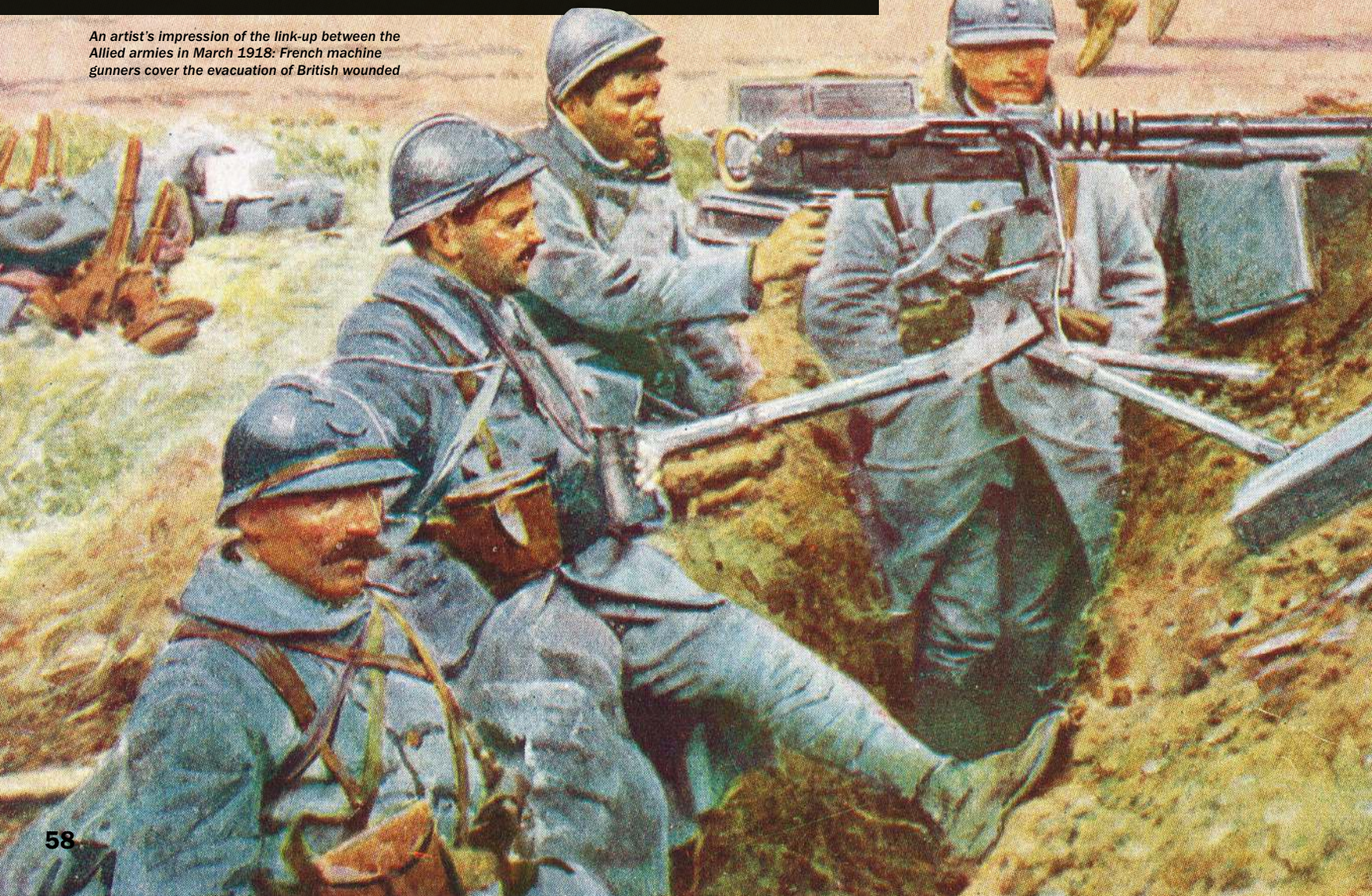
Sergeant Albert Slack left an impression of this rear-guard fighting: "From March 21 to March 25 it was 'touch and run' all the time. ... on March 22... the enemy attacked at dawn and we held him back for several hours till our ammunition was exhausted. Fritz suffered terribly... In the meantime another line had been prepared in the rear and we fell back through this line... The next day... we held off another attack till our flanks were penetrated and then we fell back slowly, keeping our line intact... We attached ourselves to a scratch mob of all sorts and with a fresh supply of ammunition again 'took the field' the same night. The next morning (24th) I haven't a clear idea of what really happened – I was too exhausted. I know we fought and retired, counterattacked... then retired again... I had only two men left in my Section."

Only in the south, where the British line joined the French, had the defence really collapsed, offering a narrow corridor through which the German assault divisions could penetrate. This obliged Ludendorff, who was improvising operations as the battle developed, to concentrate his reserves to the south

**"GERMAN STORM TROOPS  
SPEARHEADING THE OFFENSIVE  
HAD PENETRATED INTO THE GAPS  
BETWEEN THE WIDELY DISPERSED  
BRITISH DEFENSIVE OUTPOSTS"**



*An artist's impression of the link-up between the Allied armies in March 1918: French machine gunners cover the evacuation of British wounded*





## "THE INITIAL STUBBORN BRITISH DEFENCE AND DELAYING ACTIONS THEREAFTER CONTRIBUTED TO REDUCING THE MOMENTUM OF THE ADVANCE, AS DID THE GERMANS' OWN RELATIVE LACK OF MOBILITY"

to try to split the Allied armies, rather than northwards against Arras, which had been his original intention. Below Arras the southern flank of Third Army had also been attacked and had bent back, but it held, forming one of the solid hinges on which the Allies would anchor the doors that they closed in the advancing Germans' faces as reinforcements arrived.

The Allies, while momentarily shocked, were able to respond with appropriate countermeasures. Allied contingency plans to reinforce the threatened British front with French divisions proved inadequate in the face of such a powerful blow. French General Ferdinand Foch, appointed to coordinate the Allied response, nevertheless appreciated that all advances lost momentum in time owing to losses and exhaustion in the attacking troops: "The waves die down" he explained to a British liaison officer when asked why he was confident that he could contain any German attack.

The initial stubborn British defence and delaying actions thereafter contributed to reducing the momentum of the advance, as did the Germans' own relative lack of mobility and the fact that after a few days they had to cross the wasteland of the old 1916 Somme battlefield. With limited cavalry and motorised

transport, their advance progressed at only a few kilometres a day, with the exception of 23 March when they pushed beyond the British defensive zone into open country and made 16 kilometres (ten miles) – impressive by Western Front standards but hardly fast.

Moreover, the advance soon extended beyond the range of supporting heavy artillery, making it easier for the Allied reserves, whose own artillery had not yet deployed, to mount effective opposition. French and British cavalry formations could move rapidly to set up a defensive screen to delay the Germans until slower-moving infantry divisions could entrench and re-establish the line. Meanwhile, 77 French squadrons were committed to delaying German progress by bombing and machine-gunning the massed German columns marching westwards.

Since they had to be moved by road and railway from behind the French front, it would take time for Allied reserves to be concentrated to contain the enemy thrust. Meanwhile, steps were taken to make the fractured Anglo-French coalition more solid. Since British Commander-in-Chief Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig and his French counterpart, General Philippe Pétain, felt that the other was not responding to the crisis with sufficient alacrity, their relationship

## ATTACK VERSUS DEFENCE

BY 1918 BOTH SIDES HAD DEVELOPED DYNAMIC MODERN TACTICS, WHOSE PROPER APPLICATION MADE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BATTLEFIELD VICTORY AND DEFEAT

The German army's 'storm troop' tactics, which proved so effective in March 1918, are often represented as an innovation that broke the Western Front trench stalemate that had existed since the end of 1914. In fact, it was the scale on which these tactics were applied rather than the method itself that really made a difference on 21 March. German methods were merely one manifestation of the combined-arms tactical systems that all armies had been developing since 1915, which paired overwhelming artillery fire with infantry shock action to overcome fixed defences and capture ground.

Nor were such tactics a surprise to the Allies. The Italian Second Army had been overwhelmed by them at Caporetto in October 1917, and they had been used against the British on a small scale in November 1917 when the Germans counterattacked successfully at Cambrai. The Allies themselves, and in particular French forces, had used such infantry tactics in their offensives since 1916, thereafter incorporating new weapons such as tanks (which the Germans lacked) and aircraft into an increasingly mechanised system of warfare.

All armies' tactics depended on overwhelming artillery firepower: how the German system differed from the Allies was in its use of a relatively short, surprise and paralysing hurricane bombardment developed by the artillery expert Georg Bruchmüller in battles on the Eastern Front. The bombardment of high-explosive and gas shells, which on 21 March had seven separate phases and would roll forwards and backwards across the Allied positions, would target headquarters and communications as well as field defences, thereby paralysing the enemy's command and control system just long enough for the lightly armed and fast-moving storm troops to break into the enemy's defences and push through into the enemy's rear areas. Supporting infantry formations would then overwhelm surviving centres of enemy resistance, giving the Germans control of the whole battlefield.

The counterpoint to such tactics was defence in depth, as the Germans had demonstrated in the Third Battle of Ypres in autumn 1917. Fifth Army had reorganised its front into three defensive zones. Machine guns would be deployed in the lightly held forward zone to break up the enemy's initial assault. The battle zone behind, in

which the main fighting would take place, consisted of a number of mutually supporting strongpoints. Behind that was the rear zone, where reserves were held beyond enemy artillery range, ready to counterattack and regain any lost ground once the enemy's assault formations had been broken up.

While theoretically sensible, in the event Fifth Army failed to hold its battle zone. It has been variously suggested that the new defensive tactics were not

properly understood by those who had to implement them, that the defences themselves were unfinished and therefore too weak and that they were undermanned, making an effective defence impossible. Whatever the reason for Fifth Army's defeat, it was ironically Germans adapting Allied offensive tactics effectively and British troops failing to master German defensive methods that produced the crisis in March 1918.

German storm troops advancing







*Above: A marching column of German reserves cross the old Somme battlefield near Albert. Such columns were good targets for Allied ground-attack aircraft*

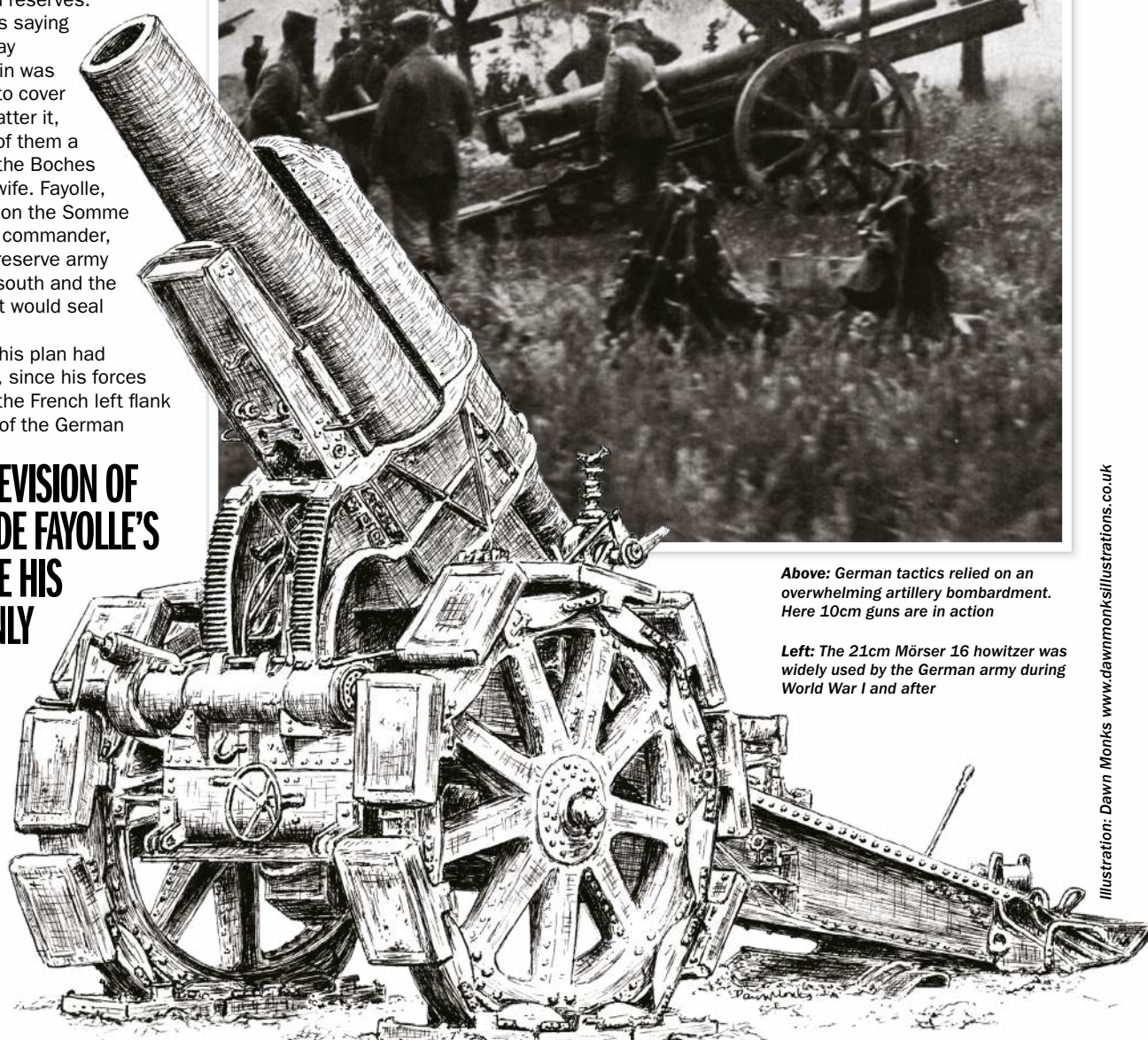
was under strain. To prevent a crisis turning into a disaster, in conference at Doullens on 26 March it was agreed that Foch, the commander with the greatest experience of coalition operations, would coordinate the defence, interceding between Haig and Pétain and effectively controlling Allied reserves. "It's disgraceful... Haig was saying that he could not move away from his bases and... Pétain was alleging that his army had to cover Paris, that he could not scatter it, and that between the two of them a breach was opening to let the Boches through," he later told his wife. Fayolle, who had worked with Foch on the Somme in 1916, would be his field commander, in charge of a new French reserve army group moving up from the south and the remnants of Fifth Army that would seal the breach.

Ludendorff's revision of his plan had made Fayolle's task easier, since his forces would only have to extend the French left flank to oppose the main thrust of the German

**"LUDENDORFF'S REVISION OF HIS PLAN HAD MADE FAYOLLE'S TASK EASIER, SINCE HIS FORCES WOULD ONLY HAVE TO EXTEND THE FRENCH LEFT FLANK TO OPPOSE THE MAIN THRUST OF THE GERMAN ATTACK"**



*Above: German tactics relied on an overwhelming artillery bombardment. Here 10cm guns are in action*



*Left: The 21cm Mörser 16 howitzer was widely used by the German army during World War I and after*



*British soldiers lie dead  
in their trench after the  
Spring Offensive forced  
Fifth Army to retreat*

**"THE GERMANS WOULD BE STOPPED SOMEWHERE, FOCH KNEW, BUT FOR HIM IT WAS VITAL THAT THEY DID NOT REACH THE STRATEGIC RAIL JUNCTION AT AMIENS THAT LINKED THE BRITISH AND FRENCH SECTORS"**





*A regiment of French infantry marches to restore the front line, 30 March 1918*



*General Marie-Émile Fayolle, commander of the French reserve army group that blocked the German Spring Offensive*

### **"THIS GAIN OF GROUND – THE LARGEST IN THE WEST TO DATE – HAD COME AT THE COST OF 240,000 CASUALTIES, WHICH GERMANY COULD NOT AFFORD IN THE CLOSING STAGES OF A WAR OF ATTRITION"**

attack, and he would not have to intermingle French and British divisions – with all the problems of coordination that would inevitably bring. "The Boche is strong, but not very intelligent," he noted. "He has made a crude error. Having opened the breach between the Oise and the Somme... he has tried to turn its flanks... In the centre... the wave has spent itself... We have been given the time to concert our riposte."

The Germans would be stopped somewhere, Foch knew, but for him it was vital that they did not reach the strategic rail junction at Amiens that linked the British and French sectors. While Fayolle's troops reconstituted the defensive line, from the south Australian divisions were moved down from the British sector in the north to link up with them. The line was re-joined and a solid defence re-established at the town of Villers-Bretonneux on 30 March, atop the last ridge in front of Amiens. The advance to the south petered out a couple of days later.

Strong but hurriedly prepared attacks on the consolidating Allied lines in the early days of April were absorbed, and Ludendorff thereafter turned his attention elsewhere. At its greatest depth the push had gained 48 kilometres (30 miles), between Moreuil and Montdidier, but this gain of ground – the largest in the west to date – had come at the cost of 240,000 casualties, which Germany could not afford in the closing stages of a war of attrition. The Allies lost 255,000, including 90,000

prisoners, and 1,300 guns. As Gunner Harold Coulter wrote home in early April, "We are not beaten, if we are well bent. Old Fritz is beaten. I think it has been his dying kick, which you know is always more powerful than any other... He said he would be in Paris by 1 April. Good April fool for him when he found himself mile upon miles away."

Ludendorff's gamble had not paid off, due partly to the inevitable dynamic of offensive operations in trench warfare, in which attackers tired and defenders consolidated with fresh reserves, but also due to a bold, well-coordinated and well-led Allied response. Ludendorff would kick again, if less powerfully: four more German offensives were to follow before midsummer and the pattern was repeated in each. What Ludendorff failed to appreciate, and Foch grasped, was that the nature of warfare had changed since 1914: what appeared initially to be a breakthrough was nothing of the sort, and a single blow, however large and effective, would not bring decisive victory.

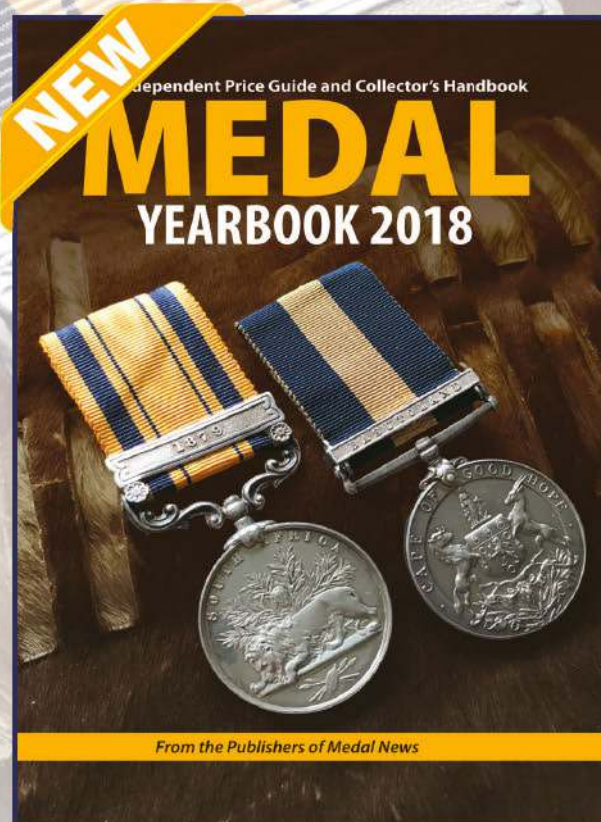
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## Heroes of the Victoria Cross

# GORDON FLOWERDEW

At the Battle of Moreuil Wood, this Lieutenant heroically led an outnumbered squadron of Canadian horsemen in a costly cavalry charge straight into German infantry, artillery and machine gun fire

WORDS ALEXANDER ZAKRZEWSKI

The British cavalry training manual of 1907 stated that modern weapons would never replace “the speed of the horse, the magnetism of the charge, and the terror of cold steel”. It was an extraordinarily unrealistic statement, quickly proven wrong when war broke out just seven years later. However, old military traditions die hard. In 1918, when the Allied armies were seemingly on the verge of collapse, an intrepid young Canadian cavalry officer proved that, while the cavalry was no longer master of the battlefield, the spirit of the cavalier will never die.

On 21 March 1918 the German army launched Operation Michael, the first stage in its great Spring Offensive, which aimed to split the Allied armies and sweep the British out of Europe. Three German armies, led by battalions of well-trained storm troops, attacked the British Fifth and Third Armies along an 80-kilometre (50-mile) front, with the heaviest blow falling astride the Somme, where so much blood had been shed two years before. Within days, the British and French lines, undermanned and under-prepared for such a devastating attack, collapsed, and the Germans were advancing westward.

Their objective was the medieval town of Amiens, the crucial railway junction that linked the British and French armies. By taking Amiens, General Erich von Ludendorff, the architect of the offensive, hoped to create a gap from which the Allied armies could be pried apart. But on 28 March, after a week of

continuous fighting, he was forced to briefly halt and allow his exhausted troops some rest. This pause gave the retreating Allies a much needed opportunity to regroup, reinforce and strike back. Among the units thrown into the fighting was the Canadian Cavalry Brigade.

When war broke out in 1914, Canada, like all other combatant countries, sent cavalry units to the front. According to the outdated doctrines of the time, they would be needed to exploit gaps in the enemy line and harry the enemy retreat. The Canadian Cavalry Brigade, which arrived in France in May 1915, included two regiments with a proud service record in the Boer War: the Royal Canadian Dragoons and Lord Strathcona's Horse. They were joined by two more Canadian units, the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery and eventually the Fort Garry Horse.

As with most cavalry units, the Canadian horsemen were quickly disillusioned by their role in the war. When they were not being sent dismounted into the trenches to make up for infantry losses, they found themselves an impotent bystander in a static defensive war, repeatedly ordered to ‘stand to your horses’ in anticipation of breakthroughs in the enemy line

that never occurred. “The phrase commonly used was that we were to gallop through the ‘G’ in ‘Gap’”, one Canadian cavalry officer observed. “They might as well have aimed for the dot in ‘futile’.” That all changed in the spring of 1918 when the brigade suddenly found itself in the thick of the fighting.

In the early hours of 30 March, the Canadians were camped south of Amiens near the village of Guyencourt when they received orders to reinforce the French troops defending Moreuil Wood, a forested ridge that overlooked the Avre River, just 19 kilometres (12 miles) southeast of Amiens. They arrived to find the French troops preparing to withdraw, and only after much persuasion was the brigade's commander, Brigadier General J.E.B. Seely, able to convince them to hold their positions. He then ordered his men to clear the wood, which was already almost completely occupied by the Germans.

For the last nine days, the brigade had been heavily engaged in a series of rearguard actions with the advancing Germans, and almost every squadron was understrength. Still, the men were happy to be on the offensive for a change, and they took to their task with renewed confidence and enthusiasm. Seely's plan called for most of the brigade to clear the woods by attacking from the north, south and west. At the same time, C Squadron of Lord Strathcona's Horse was sent racing around the northeast corner of the wood to cut off any German reinforcements from entering the treeline from the east.

**“IT'S A CHARGE, BOYS,  
IT'S A CHARGE”**

**Gordon Flowerdew**



*Lieutenant Gordon Muriel Flowerdew was a British-born Canadian rancher who led C Squadron of Lord Strathcona's Horse in a daring charge against German troops at the Battle of Moreuil Wood*

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**"THE SQUADRON (LESS ONE TROOP) PASSED OVER BOTH LINES, KILLING MANY OF THE ENEMY WITH THE SWORD; AND WHEELING ABOUT GALLOPING ON THEM AGAIN. ALTHOUGH THE SQUADRON HAD THEN LOST ABOUT 70 PER CENT OF ITS MEMBERS, KILLED AND WOUNDED FROM RIFLE AND MACHINE GUN FIRE DIRECTED ON IT FROM THE FRONT AND BOTH FLANKS, THE ENEMY BROKE AND RETIRED"**

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## HEROES OF THE VICTORIA CROSS

C Squadron was under the command of 33-year-old Lieutenant Gordon Muriel Flowerdew. Like a large percentage of Canadian troops, Flowerdew was British born, having immigrated to Canada from Norfolk at the turn of the century to take up ranching in British Columbia. His youthful face, colourful surname and affable nature earned him the nickname 'Flowers' by the men, with whom he was very popular. Over the course of the war, he had risen from the rank of corporal to lieutenant and had been slightly wounded the year before. As he set off on his latest mission with C Squadron, he

was briefly joined by Seely, who told him that "this was the most adventurous task

of all; but I am confident you will succeed." Flowerdew smiled and replied, "I know, sir, I know, it is a splendid moment. I will try not to fail you."

Moreuil Wood was as thick with Germans as it was with budding beech trees. Initial attacks on horseback suffered heavy casualties from machine gun and sniper fire, and the Canadians were forced to dismount and attack on foot with bayonets fixed. Flowerdew's C Squadron, however, made good progress. As they approached the northeast corner of the wood they killed a number of Germans, who were looting a French transport wagon. Flowerdew left Lieutenant Frederick Harvey, V.C., and a few men behind to flush out any more Germans in the area, then led his squadron up a ridge to the edge of the treeline with the intention of sweeping south and cutting the enemy off as ordered.

As the squadron crested the ridge, they spotted about 300 enemy infantry, arrayed in two lines, supported by artillery and machine guns. It was later learned that the German soldiers had been positioned there in anticipation of a rumoured Allied tank attack from the north. Flowerdew took one look at the Germans milling about and immediately

recognised the unique opportunity that had finally presented itself. "It's a charge, boys, it's a charge," he bellowed as he spurred his horse forward. Behind him, the 75 men of C Squadron drew their 1908 Pattern cavalry swords and did the same.

Cavalry doctrine dictated that the squadron should have formed into several lines, then advanced at a walk, trot, canter, and finally a gallop. But given that the enemy was only 275 metres (900 feet) away and already preparing to receive the charge, there was no time for any of that. In fact, the squadron's boy trumpeter tried to sound the charge, but was cut down by German fire before he could blow a note.

Almost immediately, the enemy opened up with everything they had, including artillery. Other than the heads and necks of their mounts, the Canadians had no cover available to them, and within seconds men and horses everywhere were crashing to the ground. Flowerdew led from the front, sword in the air, urging his troopers on. Just as the Canadians approached the first line of Germans, he was badly wounded in both thighs and fell to the ground, yet courageously continued to shout words of encouragement to his men as they charged past him.

**Left:** For much of the war, the Canadian Cavalry Brigade had little to do in a static trench war. The German Spring Offensive in 1918 gave it a new-found purpose



Sir Alfred Munnings's painting of Lieutenant Flowerdew's cavalry charge at the Battle of Moreuil. It currently hangs in the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa





*The German Spring Offensive was led by elite battalions of storm troops – elite shock troops trained to infiltrate and overrun enemy trenches*



**“MOREUIL WOOD. THAT IS WHERE THE CANADIAN CAVALRY BRIGADE SAVED THE DAY. THOSE WONDERFUL MEN HELD THE BORDERS OF THE WOOD AND EVEN REGAINED GROUND UNDER THE COMMAND OF GALLANT SEELY. YES, THERE WERE THE ROYAL CANADIAN DRAGOONS, THE LORD STRATHCONA’S HORSE AND THE FORT GARRY HORSE – I SHALL NEVER FORGET THEM”**

**Marshal Ferdinand Foch**

Those Canadians that managed to reach the German lines hacked and slashed furiously at the enemy but were eventually overwhelmed and forced to retreat. Only one trooper, Sergeant Wooster, managed to fight his way through both enemy lines. Finding himself suddenly totally alone on the foggy battlefield, he galloped back to Seely to report that the entire squadron had been destroyed. It was an exaggeration, but not by much. A third of the squadron had been killed and another 15 mortally wounded.

Among the dying was Flowerdew. Two Royal Canadian Dragoons found him bleeding heavily but conscious and in surprisingly good spirits near the treeline. As he was being carried away, machine gun fire wounded one of his rescuers in the foot. Despite the severity of his own wounds, he insisted that the two men seek cover immediately. Four other men eventually carried him to a first aid post, from which he was evacuated to a field hospital near Namps. One of his legs was amputated, but unfortunately his life could not be saved and he died the following day.

Fighting in Moreuil Wood continued to rage back and forth for two more days before the

Canadians, reinforced by the British Third Cavalry Brigade and supported by the Royal Flying Corps, permanently captured the position. Flowerdew’s gallant charge had the effect of helping to distract the Germans and stymieing their advance. By 5 April, after two weeks of impressive territorial gains, Operation Michael lost all momentum, having made it no further than Moreuil. In the weeks that followed, the initiative on the Western Front shifted to the Allies, and within seven months the war was over.

Three months after the battle, Flowerdew’s posthumous Victoria Cross was presented to his mother and sisters by King George V in the Quadrangle at Buckingham Palace. It currently resides in Framlingham College in Suffolk, his childhood boarding school. In 1918, C Squadron’s charge was immortalised in a painting by the prolific Great War artist and fellow Framlingham pupil, Sir Alfred Munnings. The painting currently hangs in the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa. To this day, Lord Strathcona’s Horse, now an armoured regiment, annually commemorates the charge and Battle of Moreuil Wood as the exemplification of their regimental motto: “perseverance”.



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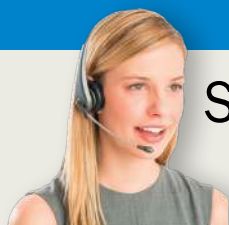

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Serbian and Austro-Hungarian forces bitterly  
fight over Mackov Kamen in September 1914

## SERBIA'S BLOODYMINDED 1914: PART II

# THE HARD RAIN OF AUTUMN

WORDS JAMES HOARE

By September 1914 the gaze of the world had turned towards the Entente defeats on the Western and Galician Fronts, but in the crucible of the Great War's origin Serbia continued its fight for survival, growing ever more desperate and daring





**“DESPITE A SHAMBOLIC DIVERSIONARY ATTACK THAT DECIMATED THE PRESTIGIOUS TIMOK I DIVISION, IN THE MAIN THE FIRST ARMY ADVANCE WAS A MODEL OPERATION”**

**N**o matter how inexperienced or overconfident the Austro-Hungarians were, they were fighting a nation already stretched to breaking point by only two months of fighting. Still lacking basic kit such as boots, uniforms and trenching tools for a great chunk of the Serbian army, munitions and medical supplies were also in the red, and those that could be seized from the retreating enemy did little to ease the pressure.

Despite the *casus belli* of Russia's war being the defence of Serbia from Austria-Hungary, the Entente's priorities had shifted dramatically. Russia's offensive in Galicia had ended in retreat and France was desperately digging in to keep the Germans from Paris. Pressure was being heaped on the Serbian government to take a more aggressive stance and force Austria-Hungary to divert forces away from the Russians.

There was certainly opportunity. The fact that Serbia was very much unconquered after Cer did nothing to draw the *Armeeoberkommando* (AOK, Army High Command) from their original plan, and the Austro-Hungarian Second Army had redeployed to the Galician Front as scheduled, leaving a single division on the Sava to guard against Serbian incursion. Furthermore, siege batteries pummelling Belgrade were being transferred to the Western Front where Belgian fortresses had put up unexpected resistance. With a few administrative strokes, the *KuK* line along Serbia's northern frontier had been transformed from a potential invasion force to a garrison of two divisions.

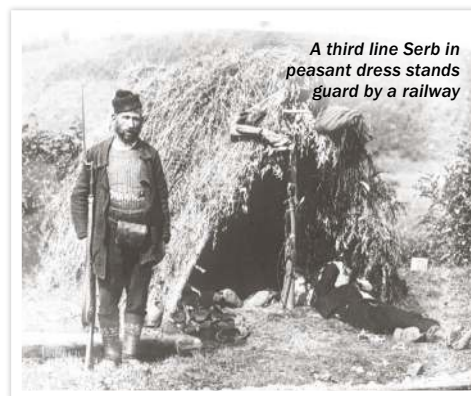
Following the delivery of ammunition from France and new fast-loading Mosin-Nagant rifles from Russia, the Serbian First Army, joined by elements of Second Army, were committed to limited actions across the Sava

into Syrmia (Srem in Serbian) that would allow them to quickly withdraw should the battle turn against them.

Despite a shambolic diversionary attack that decimated the prestigious Timok I division, in the main the First Army advance was a model operation. Facing limited resistance from 32nd Landsturm Regiment, by nightfall on 6 September the Serbian First Army had secured positions some five kilometres (three miles) north of the river crossing. On 10 September the third line territorials of the Belgrade Detachment crossed the Sava and entered Semlin (Zemun in Serbian) to a rapturous reception from local south Slavs.

In support of the northern offensive, the Serbian Užice and Montenegrin Sandzak Armies, joined by a number of Chetniks already operating behind Habsburg lines, renewed their assault in eastern Bosnia.





A third line Serb in peasant dress stands guard by a railway



Serbian artillery was left desperately short of ammunition, sometimes needing permission to fire a shell

## THE BATTLE ON THE DRINA

Oskar Potiorek, the Austro-Hungarian governor of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was acutely aware that he needed to act quickly and decisively. He ordered a large-scale offensive across the Bosnian border into Macva, hoping to force the Serbs to curtail their advance into Syrmia to head it off. Rather than repeat the mistakes of Cer, this time the combined Austro-Hungarian Sixth and Fifth Armies would advance together in a line along the Drina.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire was now using its strength to its advantage. Outnumbering the defending Serbian Second and Third Armies by nearly two-to-one, the Fifth Army had 89 battalions and 250 artillery pieces against the Second's 54 battalions and 123 artillery, while the Sixth Army deployed 125 battalions, 92 machine guns and 165 artillery pieces opposite the Third's 66 battalions, 43 machine guns and 88 artillery pieces.

Having softened up the defenders over the previous day with the pounding of artillery, in the early hours of 8 September the Fifth Army's VIII Corps crossed the river into the marshland beyond. In what looked like a repeat of Potiorek's August nightmare, by nightfall they were in retreat – forced back by the dogged defence of Second Army's Morava I infantry division.

On 13 September the regrouped Fifth Army renewed its offensive in what was becoming little more than slaughter along the lower Drina. Units crossed and were forced back by the Serbian Second Army, unable to consolidate their hold on the opposite bank, but the vulnerability of the defenders to the superior numbers of their foe was pronounced. On 16 September the Fifth Army's Combined Corps crossed the Sava to the Second Army's rear at

**“WEARILY AND STUBBORNLY, THE SECOND ARMY AND THE FIFTH ARMY DUG INTO THE MUD, FACING EACH OTHER FROM THEIR TRENCHES IN THE CONGEALED EARTH OF THE DRINA VALLEY”**

the site of Timok I's disastrous diversion, and with only the marsh and the third line territorials to slow their advance, took the village of Pricinovic, ten kilometres (six miles) from the crossing, on 18 September.

The Second Army's risk of encirclement was now growing from the north as well as the south and Stepanovic had little choice but to order the bloodied Timok I division back into the fray, costing them a further 1,900 men to halt the KuK advance at Pricinovic. A Second Army officer recorded the growing sense of desperation in his diary: “You can't count on the morale of our soldiers. They fight because they have to.”

Wearily and stubbornly, the Second and Fifth Armies dug into the mud, facing each other from their trenches in the congealed earth of the Drina valley.

## HARD CLIMB TO MACKOV KAMEN

Cloaked in a thick fog that rolled along the upper and middle Drina, the Sixth Army crossed the river on 8 September and forced the diminutive Serbian Third Army into the thickly forested mountain peaks lining the valley.

Not even the thick forests and perpetual drizzle could halt the advance of Austria-Hungary's Sixth Army as they fought upwards, led by a number of heavy mountain brigades. By 11 September they had driven the Serbs from the strategically vital plateau of Mackov Kamen on Mount Jagodnja. At 923 metres (3,028 feet) above sea level, it offered commanding views of both the Drina and the road to the Jadar valley.

Not only had the Serbian Third Army lost its redoubt but ammunition was growing critical – perfectly serviceable cannon were withdrawn for lack of anything to fire, and those batteries that did have ammunition were forced to seek approval from their divisional commander for each shell spent. There was only one course of action available and – as Potiorek had hoped – Field Marshal Radomir Putnik ordered Serbia's First Army to immediately withdraw from Syrmia. By 14 September only a handful of units remained behind in Semlin to deny the enemy a platform from which to pummel Belgrade.

Force-marched to Macva, the First Army was ordered to circle round the Third Army's position and sweep up northeast along the mountain ridge into the right flank of Austria-Hungary's Sixth Army, colliding with units of the XVI Corps on 16 September and driving them back across the Drina.

Pivoting to face this new assault, the Sixth Army formed a defensive line on the ridge running north from Mackov Kamen to its sister plateau of Košutnja Stopa, the highest point of Jagodnja. On 19 September the Serbian First Army began to probe this new line with Danube I and II divisions. Initially pushed back by the Seventh Mountain Brigade and their withering artillery support, both divisions concentrated their efforts on Mackov Kamen, and in a bloody



# TENDING SERBIA'S WOUNDS

HISTORIAN SALLY WHITE EXPLAINS THE ROLE OF BRITISH VOLUNTEER MEDICS IN THE BALKANS

Moved by reports of Serbia's immense suffering in autumn and winter 1914, many female volunteers travelled to Serbia with the British Red Cross to provide the medical assistance that the Serbian army so desperately needed. Sally White, the author of new book *Ordinary Heroes: The Story Of Civilian Volunteers In The First World War*, explains what motivated these women to leave the comfort of their homes and journey to the Balkans to see the war at its most barbaric, and what they experienced there.

**When did the first volunteers depart for Serbia, and in what capacity did they serve?**

The first units arrived in Serbia in March 1915. Mabel Grouitch, wife of the Serbian Foreign Secretary Slavko Grouitch, set up the Serbian Relief Fund in London during the winter of 1914 and began holding meetings to raise funds and publicise the plight of the Serbians. Drs James and May Berry from the Royal Free Hospital were among the first to respond, having already spent some time travelling in Serbia and knowing some Serbian. They set out in March 1915 on the same boat as the unit led by Mrs St Claire Stobart. Medical units did not just consist of doctors and nurses: they also took an administrator, cooks, drivers, orderlies and sanitary officers.

**How was the Serbian Campaign in 1914 perceived back home?**

Until Madam Grouitch began her campaign few people in Britain had any idea what was happening in Serbia. Their minds were focussed on France and Belgium and the hope or belief that the war would soon be over. As waves of refugees were displaced from their homes all over Europe people in Britain received endless appeals for help, and it took some time before people began to engage with the need to help the Serbians. I think what was happening there seemed very remote.

Going to the Balkans appealed to women who were more adventurous than those seeking to help in France or Belgium. Quite a few of them were mavericks who had been rejected as VADs [members of Voluntary Aid Detachments] or who lacked the necessary experience to be allowed to go to France. Those women did not want to stay in England rolling bandages or working in war hospital supply depots. They wanted to be in the thick of things, making, as they saw it, a real difference.

**Ordinary Heroes:**  
The Story of Civilian  
Volunteers in the First  
World War by Sally White  
is out now from Amberley



**What were the physical conditions like for volunteers in Serbia?**

The conditions were frequently appalling, as they lived and worked in either tented hospitals or previously deserted buildings that they cleaned and adapted for hospital use. They roasted in the dust of summer and froze in winter. They often lacked a decent water supply, and on occasions had streams of floodwater flowing through their kitchens. When the groups first arrived they were cushioned by all the equipment and tinned food they had taken with them, but as local food shortages worsened and as they ran short of money or shipments from home, life must have got even harder. A considerable number of volunteers caught typhus and a few died.

Notwithstanding the difficulties, a number of women relished their experiences, enjoying comradeship, adventure and the chance to be useful.

**The volunteers would have been the first Brits exposed to some of the worst that 20th-century warfare could offer. How did they cope psychologically?**

Whereas volunteers in France and Belgium often signed up for the duration of the war, some of the volunteers in the Balkans had shorter contracts and were relieved to go home and get back to normality. They gained huge support from letters from their families and friends, but these could be delayed for months, and it is clear that feelings of isolation and loneliness then set in.

I am sure that a considerable number of the volunteers suffered post-traumatic stress disorder and that their problems were never recognised. Some were unable to cope in Serbia and had to go home. A fair proportion clearly relished the excitement and challenges of their work, and it is easy to understand how hard they would find it to fit back into the limitations of middle-class life in Britain after all they had experienced. At the end of the war a few were unable to settle back in Britain and returned to Serbia, continuing their work or running orphanages.

**"THEY WANTED TO BE IN THE THICK OF THINGS, MAKING, AS THEY SAW IT, A REAL DIFFERENCE"**

A Red Cross volunteer tending a Serbian man. The volunteers often experienced challenging conditions and traumatic sights





three-hour clash pushed the Austro-Hungarian troops 400 metres (1,300 feet) down the opposite slope to reclaim the plateau. Nightfall, rain and fog brought a halt to the bloodshed, though gunfire and (mainly Austro-Hungarian) cannon fire whined through the darkness – a reminder that any respite was only illusory.

By now the Sixth Army was down to half strength from the bitter mountain combat, and its reserves were largely depleted. But withdrawal wasn't simply a matter of leaving Jagodnja – it would make the Sixth Army's presence in Serbia untenable, leave the Fifth Army in Macva open to a counterattack and ultimately end in another humiliating withdrawal back across the river to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### THE BITTER STORM

More rain was followed by thick fog on 20 September, which wrapped its fingers around the mountain peaks. Attacks and counterattacks were attempted and shrugged off, the conditions masking the full extent of the carnage from either side as men were forced down the narrow mountain ridges and onto the plateaus. Despite their lack of ammunition, the Serbs brought artillery forward, firing 'from the hip' directly into the attacking troops – a tactic the KuK quickly adopted in return. In a moment of apocryphal dark humour, one Serbian officer, Colonel Dušan Puric, shouted across at the enemy, "Surrender, don't die so stupidly!" From the opposite lines, Habsburg Serbs in a predominantly Croatian regiment replied, "Have you ever heard of Serbs surrendering?"

Fighting intensified on 22 September, following the same bloody pattern of charge and counter-charge as both sides wrestled for control of Mackov Kamen. The close-quarter fighting, the deafening thump of point-blank artillery and the Austro-Hungarian use of

explosive Einschusspatronen rounds (banned under the Hague Convention) turned the mountain top into a scene of post-apocalyptic blasted trees and mangled bodies.

By the time the sheer weight of Austro-Hungarian numbers and machine guns conclusively drove the Serbs from the plateau by the afternoon of 22 September, there were approximately 2,000 corpses littering the 500-square-metre clearing – four dead bodies for every metre. The Sixth Army immediately dug in, but they needn't have bothered – the Serbian First and Third Armies were spent.

### COUNTING THE COST

The Battle of Mackov Kamen was, in terms of tactical objectives, an Austro-Hungarian victory, but the strategic implications left little room for rejoicing. What reinforcements were available were being desperately flung at the Fifth Army's narrow foothold, and while the Sixth Army was in a better state than its Serbian counterparts, its ability to mount any further offensives was similarly minimal.

For Potiorek pressure was beginning to grow elsewhere. What had begun as an irritation in eastern Bosnia had rolled into a major concern: the advancing Užice Army and Sandzak Army took Pale on 25 September and Romanija on 2-3 October, threatening to cut off the Sixth Army's supply line and provoke an insurrection among local south Slavs – which could consume Sarajevo and sever much of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Habsburg crown.

Potiorek was forced to order desperate diversionary attacks of his own that saw the Serbian rearguard in Semlin finally ejected and probing attacks resume along the Sava, while units set aside for Galicia or the Italian border were pulled from the AOK's strategic reserve to secure the Sixth Army's rear.

After weeks of overrunning local militia as it meandered through eastern Bosnia, the Užice Army hesitated in the face of an organised KuK counterattack while the Montenegrins – who were preoccupied mainly with looting – bolted on 21 October, leaving their allies exposed and forcing the Serbian Užice Army into a fighting retreat. The Užice Army was ejected from Bosnia days later.

Had the men been better disciplined and the objectives clearer, the front in eastern Bosnia might well have transformed the entire campaign in Serbia's favour. Similarly, the invasion of Syrmia – albeit tactically successful in the main – was a strategic folly that made the flexible defence displayed at Cer impossible. For an army that was both smaller and less technologically sophisticated than its enemy – as well as suffering from critical shortages of material – it was absolutely unforgivable. Putnik's reputation had been saved only by the competence of his officers in the field and the generally high standard of his first and second line troops.

Nonetheless, Potiorek's Second Austro-Hungarian Offensive had fallen short of its overall strategic aims. The KuK's gains in Serbia were slight, the Fifth Army held a 10x25 kilometre (6x15 mile) strip of mud from Pricinovic to Ljubovija, along with Parašnica, in the bend of the Sava, while the Sixth Army held a slice of lonely foothills and the plateaus of Jagodnja.

Both Fifth and Sixth Armies were depleted to the point of being unable to mount any significant operations. Furthermore, the very fact that the 'pig farmer' Kingdom of Serbia was still fighting – let alone having been in a position to threaten Sarajevo – was a personal embarrassment.

The clock was ticking on both Oscar Potiorek's Balkan adventures and on the very survival of Serbia as a nation.

Images: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Getty

## »»» COMING IN PART III

THE KUK BALKAN ARMY MOUNTS AN ALL-OR-NOTHING OFFENSIVE TO TAKE BELGRADE AND CRUSH THE SERBIAN ARMY. Serbia's Bloodyminded 1914: Part III won't appear in the next issue of *History of War*, but you will find it in Issue 54, on sale 19th April 2018. Subscribe at [myfavouritemagazines.co.uk](http://myfavouritemagazines.co.uk) and make sure you don't miss it.

**"HAD THE MEN BEEN BETTER DISCIPLINED AND THE OBJECTIVES CLEARER, THE FRONT IN EASTERN BOSNIA MIGHT WELL HAVE TRANSFORMED THE ENTIRE CAMPAIGN IN SERBIA'S FAVOUR"**



An Austro-Hungarian depiction of the Serbian Timok I's division's (left) disastrous diversionary crossing



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# A TEENAGER IN THE BLITZ

AN INTERVIEW WITH  
GLENNIS 'BUNTY' LEATHERDALE

WORDS TOM GARNER



Only 15 years old when war broke out in 1939, Glennis Leatherdale stayed at home in London throughout WWII and grew up around the mayhem of the wartime capital





**Main image:** East End children made homeless by the Blitz, September 1940. As part of her physiotherapy training Leatherdale would treat East End children who had rickets

**Inset, left:** Glennis 'Bunty' Leatherdale during WWII. Leatherdale refused to be evacuated and kept a diary during 1943 while training to become a physiotherapist at Guy's Hospital

In 1940 Britain seemed to be on the brink of collapse as Western Europe fell to Nazi domination and RAF pilots struggled to maintain air superiority over home skies. An invasion seemed imminent, and to make matters worse Adolf Hitler directed the Luftwaffe to target civilians in mass bombing raids to heighten the sense of despair. What became known as the 'Blitz' brought devastation to London in particular, but the spirit of the people remained defiant.

Civilians quickly learned to adapt to incessant attacks and horrific sights for over five years. One of those determined Londoners was a teenager called Glennis Leatherdale. Nicknamed 'Bunty', Leatherdale refused to be evacuated and spent the entire war at home working in a bank and training to be a physiotherapist. Unlike many of her fellow citizens, Leatherdale wrote a fascinating diary in 1943 and recalled sheltering from air raids, surviving bomb attacks, treating wounded servicemen and taking inspiration from some of the darkest moments in London's history.

Leatherdale was born on 2 February 1924 above her father Alfred's bakery business in Kennington Lane, London. The bakery was a thriving family enterprise. "My grandfather started a business all on his own. He made the bread and went out in 1870, and my father eventually took it over. When my father died he had a chain of 12 shops throughout London so it had developed into a big business."

Alfred Leatherdale was a World War I veteran who had been severely wounded in the hand, but this did not hinder his work. "He got a hand full of shrapnel at Passchendaele in 1917. When he was wounded the medics wanted to amputate his hand but he said, "No, I'll keep it." He wanted a stiff hand rather than no hand at all so that his business could continue. I always remember that his hand

was a bit stiff and there were little marks on it, but it didn't stop him."

Alfred was later able to buy a large Edwardian house soon after his daughter was born, on Croxted Road in Dulwich. Leatherdale remembered her home as "lovely" and that it had a "cellar, which was useful because we spent a lot of time down there during the war".

## Refusing evacuation

Britain declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939 and Leatherdale, who was only 15 years old, remembered the change of atmosphere: "I was on the way back from a holiday in Cornwall and was still at school. I decided I needed to return because there were the rumblings of war, and I remember seeing soldiers getting on the train back from Cornwall. You suddenly realised that something awful was going to happen."

After the declaration there were immediate evacuations of children from cities to the countryside. However, Leatherdale chose to remain in London. "After war was declared I then had to leave school because the school was evacuated, and I didn't want to go away. I had relatives in New Zealand that my parents wanted me to go to, but I didn't want to. I was awkward really, I just didn't want to be evacuated and wanted to stay with my parents in my home."

Although she was only 15, Leatherdale was fortunate in that she had already gained a qualification that was necessary for her future career as a physiotherapist. "I was lucky because I was in a class ahead of my age and I had taken a school certificate that term and got a credit. Without that I wouldn't have been able to do physiotherapy." Leatherdale's decision

**Below:** A Heinkel He 111 bomber flies over Wapping and the Isle of Dogs on the first day of the London Blitz, 7 September 1940



**Right:** Glennis Leatherdale's father Alfred was a WWI veteran who was wounded in the hand. As a baker, Leatherdale had been in a reserved occupation but he still chose to fight

**"I REMEMBER SEEING SOLDIERS GETTING ON THE TRAIN BACK FROM CORNWALL. YOU SUDDENLY REALISED THAT SOMETHING AWFUL WAS GOING TO HAPPEN"**



to stay at home also meant that she lived in London throughout the capital's most tortured years of the 20th century.

### The Blitz

Between 1940-41, the Luftwaffe subjected Britain to concentrated, direct bombings of industrial targets and civilian centres. Although other cities like Coventry were reduced to ruins it was London that suffered the most. The 'Blitz' (translated from German: 'lightning') began with heavy raids on 7 September 1940 during the Battle of Britain and continued until May 1941.

Among this carnage was Leatherdale, who wanted to become a physiotherapist but was forced to wait until she was 18 before she could begin training. Leatherdale consequently found herself working for Barclays Bank on the City Road. "I think it was a bit of nepotism on my father's part. He got me into this bank and they'd never had a female let alone a teenage girl! But they were so kind to me and very gracious. We also used to go down to a strong room when there was an air raid."

Travelling to work during the Blitz could be an arduous affair. "I remember trying to get to work after there had been a terrific fire raid. There were no buses so I had to walk all the way through Brixton as far as the Oval Underground. Brixton had been terribly burnt and I had to step over these great hoses where they'd been trying to put the fire out. Once I got to the Oval I was alright but of course there were still plenty of people sleeping down on the platforms from the night before. I think many of them stayed there all day as well because you felt really safe down in the Underground."

Many Londoners sought sanctuary in the Underground, but Leatherdale sheltered in the family cellar that her father had reinforced. "We were down in the cellar every night during that

**"IT WOULD HAVE BEEN HORRIBLE TO GO OUTSIDE INTO AN ANDERSON SHELTER. LOOKING BACK, I'M VERY GRATEFUL THAT WE HAD THAT CELLAR, IT WAS A GREAT BLESSING"**

period. My father adapted it like the 1914-18 trenches and used great big wooden props. He always said, 'Short of a bomb right on the house, we're safe down here'. It would have been horrible to go outside into an Anderson shelter. Looking back, I'm very grateful that we had that cellar, it was a great blessing."

Leatherdale recalled that the stress of the Blitz was probably greater for her parents: "In a way I was more worried about my parents. My mother had my father on the Western Front during World War I and now their two children were of service age. I think it must have been much more stressful for them than it probably was for me at that sort of age. You only think of these things afterwards."

Leatherdale's brother Peter eventually served in the RAF (and survived) while Glennis left Barclays at 18 to train as a physiotherapist at Guy's Hospital, Southwark.

### Treating servicemen

For Leatherdale, 'physio' training at Guy's was "quite inspirational really. I'd read an article about 'Healing Hands' and immediately wanted to do it. I loved doing something that I thought would be practically useful and it was an interesting time up at Guy's. We had a

wonderful anatomy tutor who was absolutely inspirational. If you have a good tutor it makes all the difference."

Homework from Guy's had a macabre twist that was not lost on Leatherdale's father.

"When I was studying I had a proper skeleton down in the cellar. I hired it from Cambridge because it eventually had to have a proper burial, so I had this real dead person with me! My father would say, 'It's bad enough with those bombs coming down and you're sitting there with a skull on your lap!'"

A significant part of her training was treating wounded servicemen who were convalescing at Orpington Hospital. "They'd already had initial treatment and we'd give them exercises to do. You'd have six servicemen on one side, six on the other and the physio would be standing on a table in the middle wearing a very short little apron. We'd get all sorts of remarks because I'd be standing up there trying to get them to do exercises and they were very cheeky!"

Leatherdale also spent time at Queen Victoria Hospital in East Grinstead where she observed innovative plastic surgery. "I remember we had Archibald McIndoe, who was a pioneer of plastic surgery for facial injuries. It was mainly for men in the RAF who got these burns, and he was a great plastic surgeon.

We used go down there for training and I went to see what was going on. I always remember there was this young man walking towards me with a big grin on his face. I said, 'Oh, you look happy' and then I realised it was scarring that was causing it. So it was an awful thing."

During her training, Leatherdale almost fell foul of a falling bomb that nearly derailed her train to Guy's. "It exploded right near the railway line so we weren't allowed to get out or do anything. That was a bit of a scary moment because if we had moved much the train would

Right: V-2 rockets were the world's first long-range, guided ballistic missiles. V-2s killed thousands in London, Belgium, France, the Netherlands and even Germany



Archibald McIndoe performing plastic surgery at Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead. McIndoe was an innovator in plastic surgery for facial burns and Leatherdale observed his work on RAF servicemen

Ruined buildings in Whitechapel after the penultimate V-2 attack on London, 27 March 1945. The rocket killed 134 people







Above: Firefighters work to put out blazes on Queen Victoria Street on the night of 10 May 1941. 1,486 people were killed and 11,000 houses were destroyed that night



Above: This iconic photograph depicts an undamaged St Paul's Cathedral surrounded by smoke and bomb damage during the night of 29 December 1940. The image became the most recognised symbol of the 'Blitz Spirit'



Above: A view from the roof of St Paul's towards the Old Bailey in the aftermath of the 'Second Great Fire of London', 29-30 December 1940

# CAPITAL UNDER ASSAULT

LONDON WAS THE MOST HEAVILY BOMBED BRITISH CITY DURING WWII AND BORE HEAVY MATERIAL AND HUMAN LOSSES

In 1939 London was the largest city in the world and home to more than 8.6 million people. Consequently, it became a major target of Luftwaffe bombing raids. In a horrifying twist, the targets were not just military and industrial but also deliberately included civilians in an attempt to sap morale.

20,000 tons of high explosives were dropped on London between September 1940 and May 1941, and the damage was enormous. The city was attacked 71 times (including on 57 consecutive nights) and resulted in significant numbers of destroyed and damaged buildings and the deaths of over 20,000 people.

Bombing attacks continued throughout the war, and a vigorous blackout was enforced until 17 September 1944. London was then attacked by V-1 and V-2 rockets, which caused further casualties.

The war directly destroyed 73,073 buildings in London, with countless others left in various states of damage. The total casualties by the end of the war were approximately 29,890 Londoners killed in air raids and 139,349 injured, while many more were left homeless. However, the aerial carnage did not destroy the capital because its vast infrastructure and resilient population enabled the city to recover and survive, despite the efforts of the Luftwaffe.

**"THE CITY WAS ATTACKED 71 TIMES (INCLUDING ON 57 CONSECUTIVE NIGHTS) AND RESULTED IN SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF DAMAGED AND DESTROYED BUILDINGS AND THE DEATHS OF OVER 20,000 PEOPLE"**

Firefighters tackle a blaze among ruined buildings after an air raid in 1941







*Londoners take shelter in Aldwych Underground station in 1940 during the Blitz. Leatherdale remembered stepping over sleeping civilians at the Oval Underground station on her way to work*



*Office workers make their way to work through debris after a heavy air raid. Leatherdale walked through similar scenes in Brixton while working in a bank*



*Men of the Civil Defence and National Fire Service search through rubble in the aftermath of a V-1 attack in Upper Norwood, 1944*



*Women salvage possessions from their bombed house, including plants and a clock, after an air raid in 1940*

have gone right over because of the underlying bank. All one could do was sit there and watch where the bomb had fallen on the houses, and you could see people being brought out of them. That was a pretty harrowing experience. They eventually said that we could get out and walk the rest of the way to London Bridge."

### A wartime diary

Between 1 January and 10 June 1943 Leatherdale kept a daily diary documenting her wartime experiences, although she remarked, "It's a pity I didn't start it until 1943 because it would have been more interesting during the Blitz. A lot of it was really pathetic, such as worrying about the state of my hair. It was so stupid that I was worrying about what I looked like and was so typical of a teenager."

Nevertheless, Leatherdale's diary is a fascinating glimpse of a teenager's perspective in wartime London and is a sobering reminder that Londoners still lived through frequent bombing raids in 1943. Her entry for 17 January stated, "Just as we were sitting down for supper the sirens went. Planes were over soon after and the 'Ack-Ack' barrage was very heavy. It was just like old times and I can't say I enjoyed it."

Three days later a tragic incident was recorded when dozens of children were killed at Sandhurst Road School in Catford: "(20 January) Thirty small children were killed when a school was hit and Surrey Docks was set on fire. (21 January) The number killed when that school was hit yesterday has gone up to 45. How ghastly it is!"

The frequent bombing raids on London were a wearying experience, and Leatherdale became increasingly fearful. In her diary she wrote, "(17 May) Last night was disturbed by three air raid alerts. I find I am much more scared of air raids now since I've seen the results of so many at Orpington [Hospital] than I was during the Blitz. My imagination seems to have sharpened."

However, Leatherdale was remarkably empathetic the very next day towards German civilians following the 'Dambusters' raid: "(18 May) More air raids during the night, nothing very bad but presumably they are to show the Nazis' rage at the RAF bombing of the great dams in the Ruhr on Saturday night. A very large area has been flooded at great





interference to the industrial work going on there. It is indubitably a great success, but the thought of all those civilians drowned is not the type of victory I like best."

Today, Leatherdale is pleased that she wrote that particular entry: "I remember thinking it was a bit strange that we were having all these bombs in London, but I was thinking of those German villagers that were flooded as a result of the Dambusters raid. It quite surprised me when I read it again recently, but I'm glad I wrote it and feel quite proud of myself, particularly when we were being bombed all the time ourselves."

However, despite the carnage Leatherdale managed to find plenty of time to enjoy herself, and her diaries are littered with entries about visits to the cinema and theatre. Leatherdale was perplexed at the contrast: "That's what's really quite strange. We'd perhaps spend the whole night down in the cellar with the bombs going off, but then I'd go up to Guy's for training. I'd then perhaps meet a friend and go into London to the theatre. When I read that now it amazes me, I always think I'm reading about another person."

### Doodlebugs, GIs and VE Day

Nevertheless, the war was still dangerous and London was subjected to V-weapon attacks between 1944-45. Leatherdale remembered, "We had the [V-1] flying bombs and [V-2] rockets. You did get a warning with the flying bombs but not with rockets. I remember one rocket at night when we were all upstairs because we weren't expecting an air raid. This rocket fell about a mile [1.6 kilometres] away and my goodness did it shake the house."

On another occasion a V-1 bomb killed a neighbour of Leatherdale's. "On one particular day there was a flying bomb that came over as we were leaving West Dulwich station and I heard its engine stop. I knew it was going to come down somewhere near my home and I directly phoned up. It had missed our home but it had hit the neighbours and killed the mother while her husband and family were out walking. They all came to stay with us until they could find somewhere to live."

Leatherdale's family often lodged friends in need or visiting servicemen in their large house. "You just helped out. My New Zealand cousins had naval friends who were all given



Leatherdale was at the Underground station at Piccadilly Circus when huge crowds gathered outside for VE Day, 8 May 1945

our address. We had a three-storey house so they made the top storey their area. During one of the raids while we were down in the cellar these naval chaps didn't bat an eyelid. All the plaster from the ceiling was coming down but it didn't even wake them up!"

Other Allied soldiers were a ubiquitous sight in London, and Leatherdale has fond memories of the New Zealanders: "They were very present because of my cousins and they made their home with us. It's the silly things you remember: they used to take me up to their Forces Club where I learnt to drink Pimm's!"

By contrast, American soldiers were a different proposition. "I often used to feel sorry for their girlfriends left at home. They were quite flirtatious and you had to be fairly tough with them. They thought they'd come to 'win the war', but they were friendly."

Finally, on 8 May 1945 victory in Europe was declared, and London erupted in celebration. One of the most crowded areas that day was Piccadilly Circus, and Leatherdale was there waiting for a friend. "I was at Piccadilly underground station waiting for hours for a friend of mine. This friend never came, but there was this lone Canadian airman. We were both just standing there, and he was looking a bit lonely so I said, 'Haven't you got anywhere to go? You can come home with me if you like?'"

So then he came back home with me to my family and that was my VE Day." There was a huge sense of relief that the war was over and then normal life had to start again."

### The 'Blitz Spirit'

London and other British cities had suffered terribly during the war, but as Leatherdale explained, "There was comradeship and the whole country was pulling together." This stoic determination to survive until victory was achieved became known as the 'Blitz Spirit', and Leatherdale is in no doubt that this resolve was hugely important: "I think it's a very true term. The country was under threat and they [the Nazis] were a particularly nasty lot. Of course we didn't know until afterwards what the Nazis had been doing in the extermination camps, but that made the war even more necessary. It absolutely had to be fought, there's no doubt about that."

Glennis Leatherdale went on to have a long career as a physiotherapist for the National Health Service, but she has never forgotten her teenage years in wartime London: "It was an extraordinary time for a teenager to be growing up but interesting in many ways. It really was inspirational. It gave one a tremendous feeling that something very important was happening and you were part of it."



Glennis Leatherdale is the subject of *Life of a Teenager in Wartime London*, written by her grandson Duncan Leatherdale and published by Pen & Sword History. Turn to page 92 for a review.

Smoke rises from London's docks behind Tower Bridge, 7 September 1940





## M3 STUART LIGHT TANK

COMMISSIONED: 1941

ORIGIN: UNITED STATES LENGTH: 4.53M (4FT 10IN)

RANGE: 120 KM (75 MI) CREW: 4

ENGINE: 7-CYLINDER CONTINENTAL W-670-9A PETROL  
AIR-COOLED RADIAL

PRIMARY WEAPON: 37MM M6 CANNON

SECONDARY WEAPON: 2 X .30-CALIBRE M1919A4

AIR-COOLED BROWNING MACHINE GUNS

"THE TANK WAS AN INFANTRY SUPPORT  
WEAPON THAT WOULD UTILISE SPEED,  
FIREPOWER AND ARMOUR PROTECTION IN  
THE REDUCTION OF ENEMY STRONGPOINTS"





# M3 STUART LIGHT TANK

WORDS MIKE HASKEW

This Allied armour was characteristic of American military armoured theory and was designed for an infantry support role

The development of tanks and armoured fighting vehicles in the United States lagged behind the European powers until the early 1930s, when the US Army began exploring the introduction of the 'combat car'. Its first operational tank, the M1 Combat Car, entered service in 1937, while a new light tank, the M2, was already in the design phase and nearing production. Although the M2 was deployed with US Army and Marine Corps forces soon after the United States entered World War II, the follow-on Light Tank M3 was the most widely produced American light tank of the conflict and also served via Lend-Lease with British and Soviet forces.

The M3 was conceived on the basis of US Army armoured theory. The tank was an infantry support weapon that would utilise speed, firepower and armour protection in the reduction of enemy strongpoints, machine gun nests and troop concentrations. It was also effective in the reconnaissance role. Despite the fact that the M3 was never intended for tank versus tank combat, as World War II progressed such encounters were inevitable, often laying bare its disadvantages in firepower and armour protection compared to German tanks. Nevertheless, more than 25,000 series variants were produced from March 1941 through to October 1943.

The M3 became immensely popular with Allied crews. Praising its reliability and toughness, British tankers dubbed the M3 the 'Honey', and in keeping with their nicknames for other American-built tanks, also called the M3 the 'Stuart' after General J.E.B. Stuart, a dashing Confederate cavalry commander of the American Civil War.

During the course of World War II, modifications to the basic M3 design and powerplant resulted in several variants entering service. By 1944 the M3 was being supplanted by the M24 Chaffee light tank. However, it remained in widespread use as a command and infantry support vehicle through to the end of the conflict.

*Left: An M3 Stuart Light Tank. These tanks were extensively used across multiple theatres in WWII*



**"THE PRIMARY POWERPLANT FOR THE LIGHT TANK M3 SERIES WAS THE SEVEN-CYLINDER CONTINENTAL W-670-9A AIR-COOLED, RADIAL PETROL ENGINE, GENERATING 250 HORSEPOWER AND A MAXIMUM ROAD SPEED OF 58 KILOMETRES PER HOUR"**

*Tank commander Lt. Lloyd Magill atop his M3 Stuart light tank during training shortly before war with Japan*

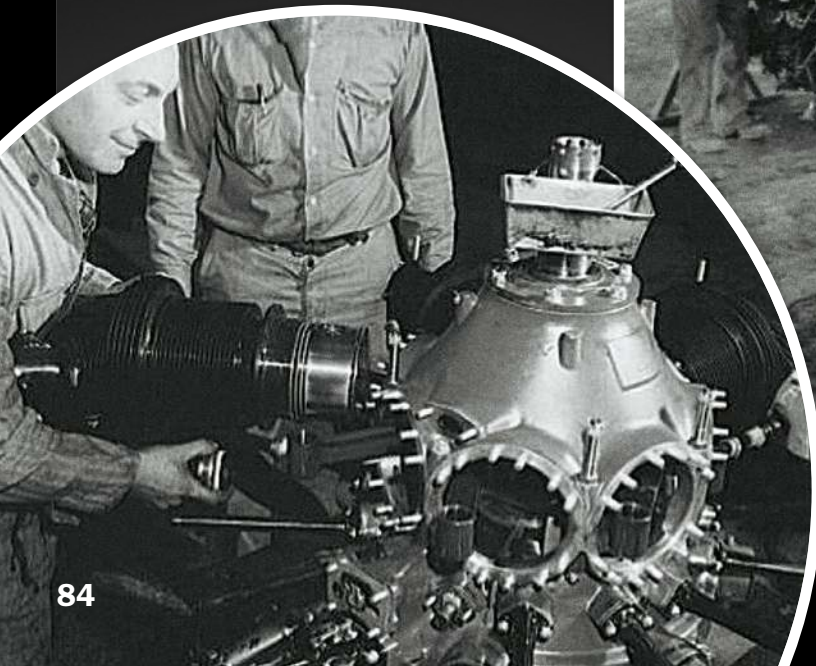
## ENGINE

The primary powerplant for the M3 series was the seven-cylinder Continental W-670-9A air-cooled, radial petrol engine, generating 250 horsepower and a maximum road speed of 58 kilometres per hour (36 miles per hour). Due to high demand for the Continental engine, alternatives were introduced, including the Guiberson diesel T-1020 and twin Cadillac V-8 engines, which required raised decking and resulted in the M5 designation. The British Army referred to this variant as the Stuart V, while the others were named Stuart III or IV depending on whether they were petrol or diesel powered. Nearly 1,300 M3 tanks were powered by the Guiberson diesel engine.

*An M3 undergoing an engine change by men of REME in Italy in 1943*



*Left: A Continental radial engine undergoing testing in 1944. Continental engines were in high demand*



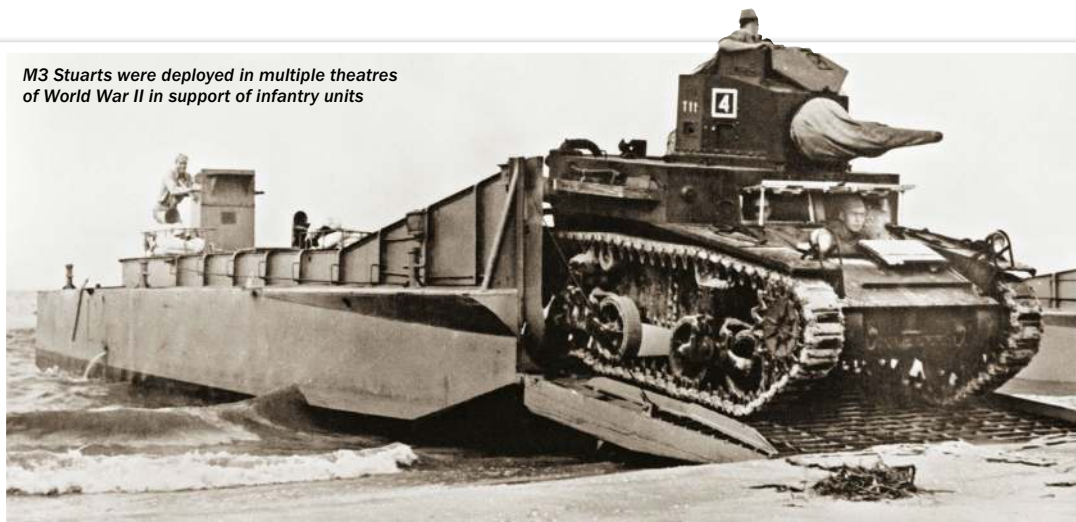


## ARMAMENT

Throughout its service life the primary armament of the M3 series was the 37mm M6 cannon mounted in the M44 turret. The 37mm weapon was effective in the infantry support role. However, it often lacked the muzzle velocity to subdue hard targets, such as concrete bunkers, or the penetrating power to defeat German armour, although it was more evenly matched against inferior Japanese tanks in the Pacific. Various configurations of the M3 mounted at least two .30-calibre Browning M1919A4 air-cooled machine guns, one positioned coaxially atop the turret, and a second ball-mounted in the hull. Some M3s carried an anti-aircraft machine gun affixed near the turret hatch.

*An American M5 Stuart equipped with a .30-calibre Browning machine gun on the turret and another at the front of the hull*

*M3 Stuarts were deployed in multiple theatres of World War II in support of infantry units*



**“IT OFTEN LACKED THE MUZZLE VELOCITY TO SUBDUED HARD TARGETS, SUCH AS CONCRETE BUNKERS”**





The Stuart was a mobile, tough and reliable tank that could thrive in a number of environments. Pictured is a M3A1 variant



**“THE CO-DRIVER COULD ALSO ACT AS A GUNNER IN COMBAT SITUATIONS”**

## CREW COMPARTMENT

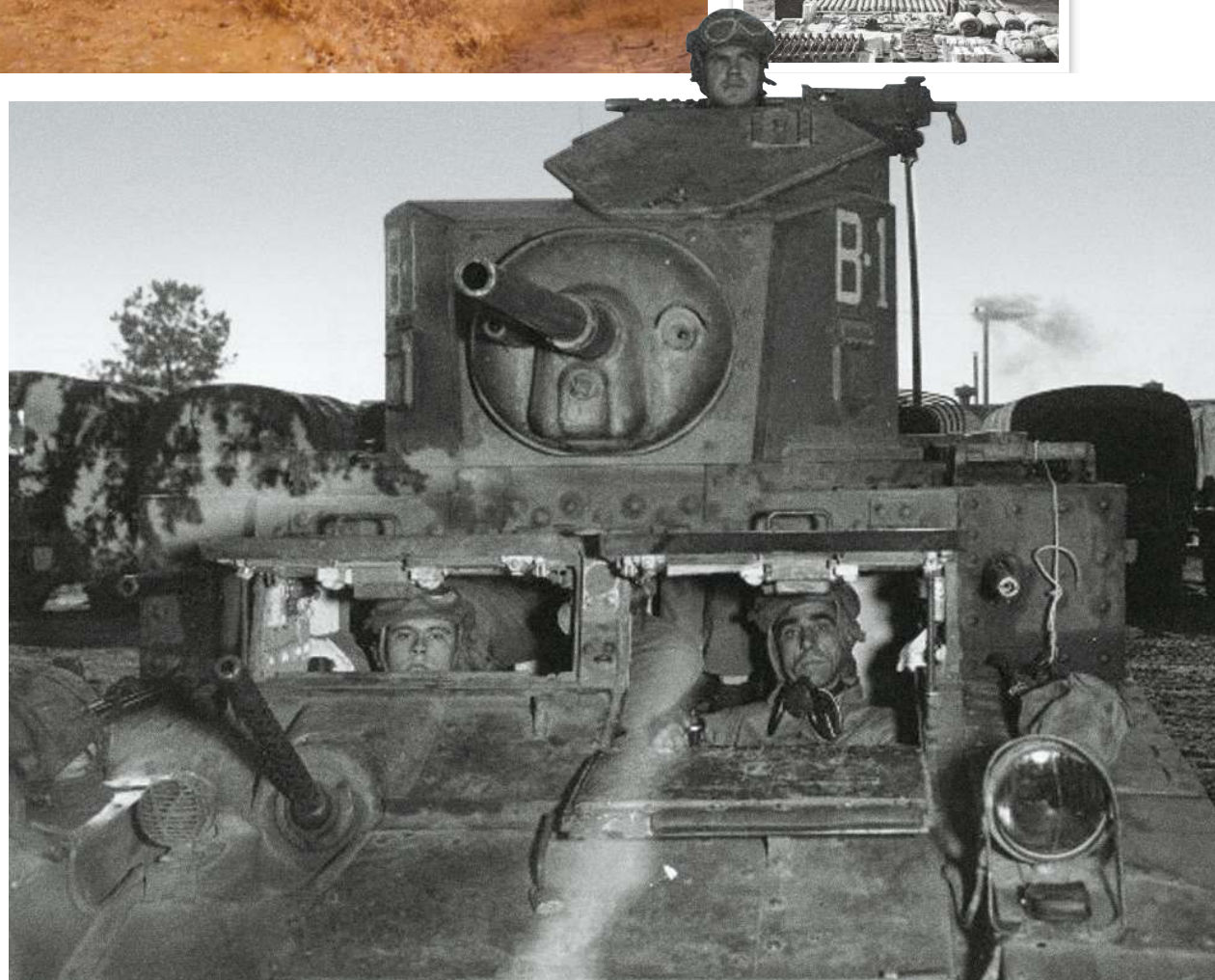
The interior of the M3 Stuart was considered spacious, with the commander and gunner located in the turret. The driver sat forward and to the left, steering the tank with tillers. The co-driver sat to his right. The later M3A3, or Stuart V as it was known to the British, included an enlarged compartment for the driver and co-driver, along with accelerator pedals in the floor, dual brake controls and seats that could be elevated, allowing them to ride with their heads outside their hatches. A British modification positioned the commander's seat so that the co-driver could also act as a gunner in combat situations.

**Right:** The driver and co-driver were positioned in the forward area of the tank, with the gunner and commander in the turret

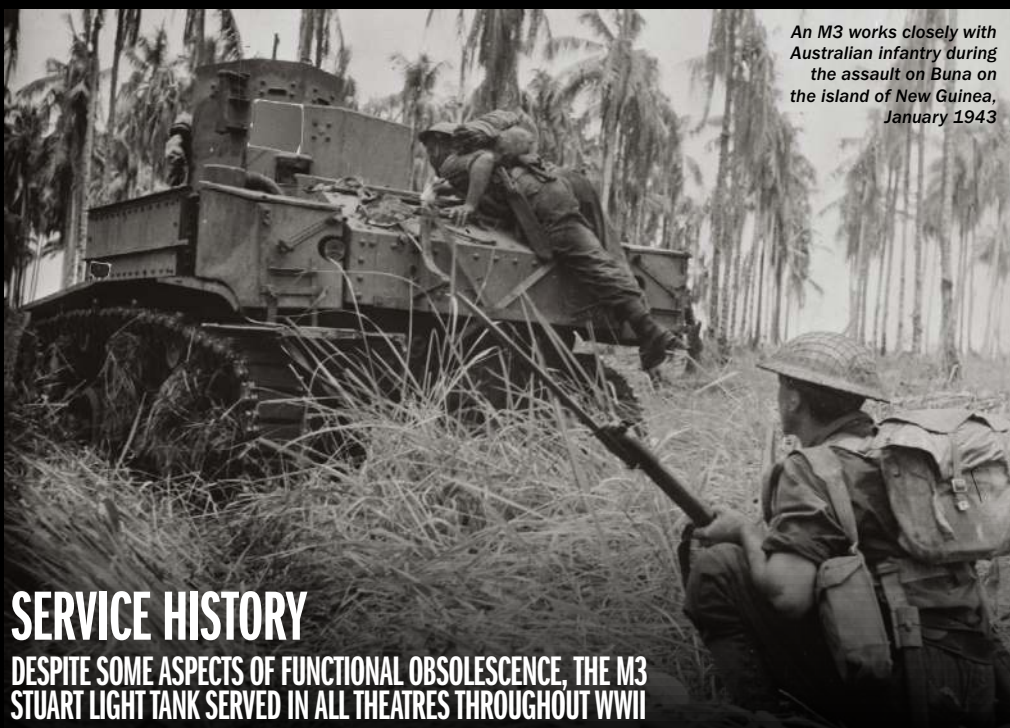
## DESIGN

The M3 design is characteristic of early US tanks, with a high silhouette and somewhat boxy profile. Conceived as an infantry support weapon, the tank was designed for mobility, with the reliable vertical volute spring suspension and idlers situated off the ground to reduce pressure. Sloped frontal and side armour with increased thickness up to 51mm was introduced with the M3A3 (Stuart V), along with a fully welded hull and extended turret to accommodate radio equipment. Still, the M3 remained highly vulnerable to enemy fire as it exemplified the American infantry support concept. Storage compartments within the hull held up to 174 rounds of 37mm ammunition for the main gun.

**Below:** A display of the crew and armament of an M3 Stuart







An M3 works closely with Australian infantry during the assault on Buna on the island of New Guinea, January 1943

## SERVICE HISTORY

**DESPITE SOME ASPECTS OF FUNCTIONAL OBSOLESCENCE, THE M3 STUART LIGHT TANK SERVED IN ALL THEATRES THROUGHOUT WWII**

The first M3 Stuarts to enter combat were received by the British Army in Egypt in July 1941, equipping the Eighth King's Royal Irish Hussars and other armoured units facing Axis forces in North Africa. Stuart crews encountered German armour for the first time during Operation Crusader the following winter, and results were mixed as the lightly armed and armoured Stuarts came in contact with enemy tanks – a combat role for which they were never intended.

Around the same time, the US entered World War II, and American Stuarts took on Japanese Type 95 Ha-Go tanks in the Philippines in December 1941. Despite a rather inauspicious beginning, the M3 proved generally superior to Japanese armour as it deployed with American, British and Commonwealth forces in the Pacific theatre. Its predecessor, the M2, supported US Marines at the Battle of the Tenaru River (actually the Ilu River) on Guadalcanal, decimating enemy troops with 37mm cannon and machine gun fire.

The M3 also served with the Soviet Red Army in 1944. Although records of its performance on the Eastern Front are sparse, it is known that the Soviets did not favour the tank because of its lack of armour protection and its tendency to catch fire when hit. The Red Army declined an American offer to supply the later M5. Although it continued to serve with Allied formations throughout World War II, the M3 was functionally obsolescent to a great extent even as it was rolling off the assembly lines of US producers, including the American Car & Foundry Company, which completed 15,224 Stuarts from 1941 to 1944 at its Berwick, Pennsylvania, facility.

The M3 was modified, including configurations as command tanks, self-propelled gun and mobile rocket platforms, flamethrower tanks and the Canadian-designed Kangaroo troop carrier. During a service life of more than half a century, the M3 equipped forces in at least 40 nations. A few were reported active into the 21st century.

**“DESPITE A RATHER INAUSPICIOUS BEGINNING, THE M3 PROVED GENERALLY SUPERIOR TO JAPANESE ARMOUR”**

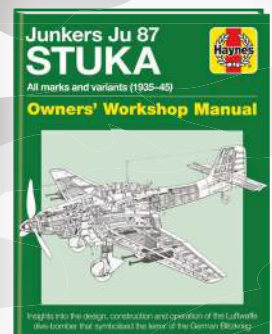
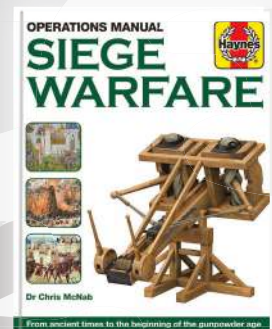
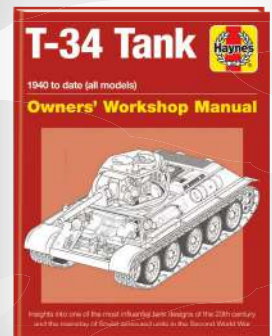
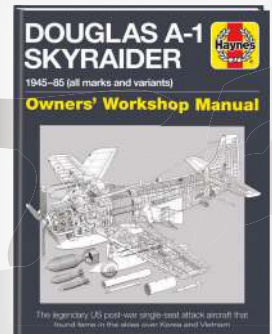


A US M3 Stuart during training prior to the USA's entry into World War II

Images: Alamy, Getty



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# MIXED MESSAGES OF 21ST-CENTURY RECRUITMENT

Robin Horsfall argues that the British Army's latest advertising campaign sends out the wrong signal to potential recruits

**R**ecent televised attempts by the UK Ministry of Defence to encourage young people to join up are creating a great deal of controversy. In response, *Daily Mail* cartoonist Mac portrayed an effeminate old man trying to join up while he holds a teddy bear. A recruitment sergeant stands alongside and weeps in despair. The comments of former and serving British soldiers on social media are in most cases unprintable.

This advertising portrays the modern soldier as a fragile individual who is unlikely to be able to cope with the stresses of a military life without the sympathy and comfort provided by counsellors. As a result, the negative reaction by veterans and servicemen and women is understandable. Members of the armed forces need to be capable of dealing with death and disaster on a daily basis. In such circumstances they are expected to cope when civilians cannot cope, and are expected to think when others are in a state of panic. Officers are expected to remain calm, to give guidance and make people believe that things will improve. This behaviour requires training from those who have experience, not guidance from social workers.

One part of the animation shows a soldier crying – this is not an image that is attractive to any potential recruit. Recruitment and performance will not improve because of a belief that when the going gets tough, recruits can simply claim that they are distressed or depressed and ask for assistance. Soldiers, pilots and sailors are people who will be asked during their careers to carry out actions that will kill other human beings, presumably in self-defence or in the defence of others. Hesitation or a refusal to obey an order because of a suddenly discovered moral dilemma could lead to failed missions and the deaths of comrades in arms.

The tendency for the media to emphasise or exaggerate the numbers of soldiers returning from active service with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder encourages the belief that all veterans are victims who need help. In her doctoral thesis *Transcending Trauma: Connecting To Life In The Face Of Death*, Dr Lucy Longhurst stated that the majority of veterans regard their active service as “a positive experience” that she describes as “Post Traumatic Growth”. In

an interview, Dr Longhurst said, “The media tendency to focus on the minority of soldiers who return from active service with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder encourages the belief that most veterans are victims who need help – a belief unsupported by research.”

In her doctoral thesis, which explored the experience of veterans who remained psychologically well despite encountering extreme trauma in combat, Dr Longhurst believed that trauma is not an inevitable outcome of encountering such events. Veterans may gain positive as well as negative experiences from combat, and may actually encounter post traumatic growth as a result of trauma. This refers to individuals who may experience themselves as enhanced by adversity.

Nevertheless, some servicemen and women do not cope well with the after-effects of warfare and do require differing levels of help after the fact. This help is provided by the armed forces, the National Health Service and supporting charities – with varying levels of success. Using such treatments as a recruitment pitch leads many to ask, “Who the hell came up with this one?”

The MOD seems to have lost the plot when it comes to recruitment: not only does the advertising fail to present the armed forces in a positive light, it also portrays an image that is unattractive to potential recruits. Men and women who want to serve are not engaged by the impression that they will be treated nicely. The majority of recruits want to be turned into tough, qualified specialists who can cope with pressure – people who can go forward into trouble and who can defend those who need protection.

For a recruitment campaign to be successful it must be led by the opinions of serving men and women with emphasis on the positive aspects of service life: teamwork, comradeship, adventure and skills training, not ‘If it’s all too much we will listen to you and love you’.

Accountants who are asked to save money regard the military as an unnecessary expense. This policy is dominated by a desire to save money that is drawn from the correct belief that armed forces are costly. As a result of this desire, a policy of disarmament and demilitarisation has been created in the UK over the past 30 years – during that time the British Army has been reduced from 130,000

to 78,000. The MOD is now struggling to raise the number to 82,000 by begging those who were made redundant to return for a cash bounty of £10,000. Those in charge of recruitment have failed to acknowledge that young adults do not wish to join an institution that will send them to war and later arrest them or make them redundant. This is not attractive, no matter how nicely you present the advertising.

The armed forces are supposed to be tough and resilient, they are supposed to deal with death and disaster. They have to be trained to be self-sufficient and adaptable. If we are to have a force that can defend our country the image they have to portray is that of a lean, mean fighting machine, not as a kind and caring institution that will listen every time you are fed up. Soldiers are expected to be brave and to have the courage to stand up to tyrants. Tyrants do not empathise, they dominate. If the armed forces can’t deter aggression then they can’t defend our nation. When the new nationalist Russia considers flying jets over Scotland or sailing warships down the English Channel it will be fear of defeat or a bloody nose that stops them.

The old campaign slogan used to be ‘Be the best’. Most of us past and present find this slogan more attractive than the recent nonsense, but even the old message struggles to be convincing in the current politically correct climate.

Soldiers have to be tough, but that toughness has to be strictly disciplined. Without control the attack dog could bite anyone. With control and strict training that attack dog will deter violence and save lives. We can’t have tough servicemen without tough training, we can’t have tough training without tough instructors and we can’t have a tough military without a tough government. If we want to be the best we had better get back to reality before it’s too late.

In the 1970s a Parachute Regiment colonel was confronted by Aldershot Borough Council about the levels of violence in the town at night. He responded with, “You can’t train men to be tigers by day and pussycats by night,” while George Orwell said, “Good men sleep safely in their beds because rough men do violence on their behalf.”



A recruitment poster from 1934 presents joining the army as an opportunity for adventure and travel – arguably a more positive recruitment message than its modern equivalent



Robin Horsfall served in Second Battalion The Parachute Regiment and the SAS for ten years, before working in security roles around the world. Today he is an inspirational after-dinner speaker and writer. His book *The Words of the Wise Old Paratrooper* is available on Kindle



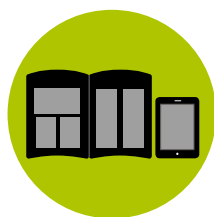
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**T**he Fleet Air Arm Museum is home to hundreds of historic aircraft and thousands of other artefacts and records, making it the largest naval aviation museum in Europe. However, some of the museum's most precious treasures are held locked away in its reserve collection, Cobham Hall, which is ordinarily off-limits to the general public.

The hall houses 30 rare and unique aircraft, as well as vessels such as the Seaplane Lighter H21, which is the oldest aircraft carrier in the world and a huge milestone in maritime history. Also on display in the hall is a Supermarine 510, a number of Westland helicopters and a Sea Harrier XZ499, which flew sorties during the Falklands War.

Over four dates in 2018, Cobham Hall is opening its doors to members of the public, providing the opportunity to tour its exhibits, as well as see a number of records and other items. The hall is only open for a limited number of slots, and tours will be conducted by the museum's senior curator, David Morris. History of War has two tickets to give away for entry on 7 June 2018, including free entry to the main museum.

For more information on the Fleet Air Arm Museum, please visit: [www.fleetairarm.com](http://www.fleetairarm.com)



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# REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books to hit the shelves

## LIFE OF A TEENAGER IN WARTIME LONDON

DUNCAN LEATHERDALE HAS WRITTEN AN ACCESSIBLE SOCIAL HISTORY OF TEENAGERS DURING WORLD WAR II USING THE DIARY OF HIS GRANDMOTHER, WHO SURVIVED THE LONDON BLITZ

**Author:** Duncan Leatherdale **Price:** £15.99 (Hardback)  
**Publisher:** Pen & Sword History **Released:** Out now

Along with the Battle of Britain and the evacuation of Dunkirk, the Blitz remains one of the most evocative symbols of the United Kingdom's struggle to survive in 1940. British cities were relentlessly bombed by the Luftwaffe to damage military targets and public morale, and it was London that suffered the most damage and casualties.

The war had a huge impact on civilians of all ages, and although the effect on adults and children has been well documented, the wartime lives of teenagers has been surprisingly neglected. Collective memories invoke images of Londoners sleeping in Underground stations, serving soldiers and evacuated children, but teenagers, who are usually a visible presence in 20th-century history, are relatively invisible between 1939-45. *Life Of A Teenager In Wartime London* seeks to redress that balance and does so admirably.

Written by Duncan Leatherdale, the book's main focus is centred around the wartime life of his grandmother Glennis 'Bunty' Leatherdale, a trainee physiotherapist who refused to be evacuated from London at the outbreak of war. Bunty lived in the capital for the entirety of the war. She wrote a diary in 1943 that uniquely described an ordinary Londoner's everyday life that was continually touched by horrific air raids.

Bunty has written a likeable forward to the book, while her diary, which covers the months from January until June 1943, is published in full at the end. However, Leatherdale has chosen not just to detail his grandmother's experiences but also to provide a general history of teenage life in London during World War II. It is this broader social history that actually covers the majority of the book, and as Leatherdale wisely points out, his grandmother's war was not unique to her but was "shared by millions".

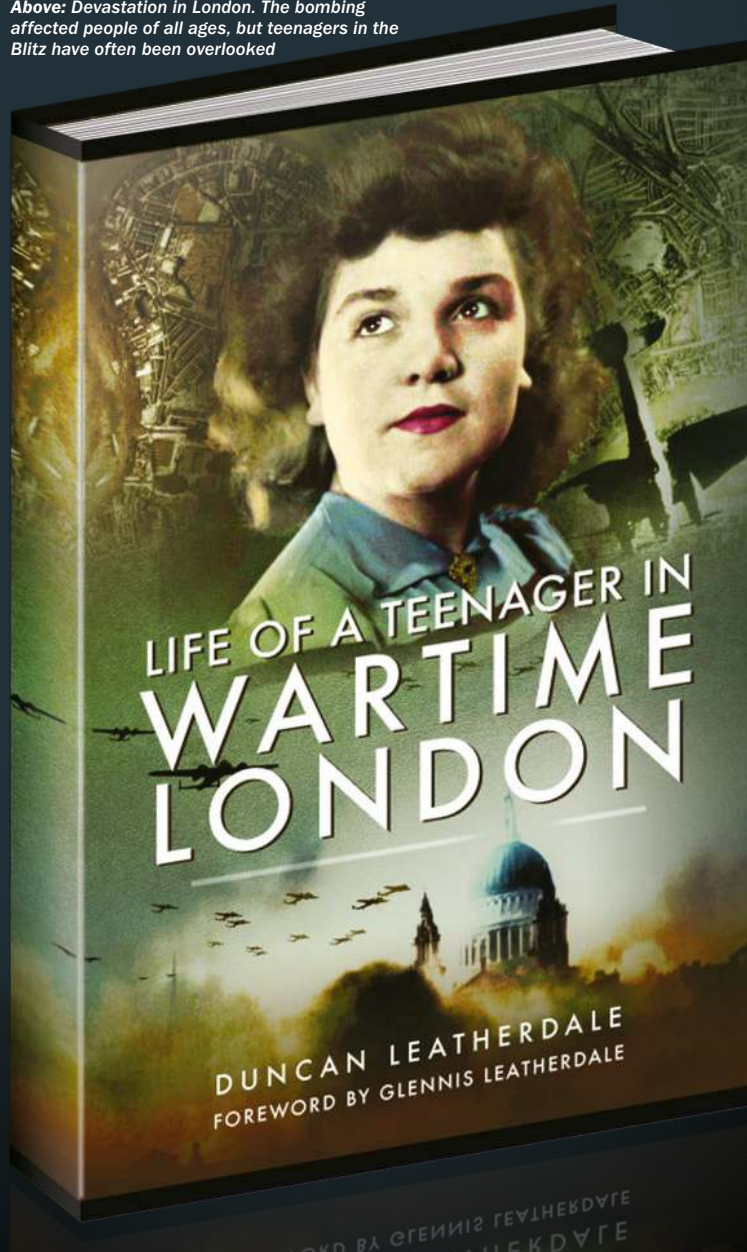
Consequently the book is full of well-researched facts and statistics and provides a different insight into what is admittedly an already well-known subject. The British Home Front is such a familiar period of history that it can sometimes seem that there is little left to write about. But by focussing on teenagers, Leatherdale has filled a demographic gap that is not always apparent. Using Bunty's and other teenagers' testimonies, it becomes clear that wartime adolescents were just as consumed by confusing dilemmas as they are today but were further burdened by a heightened sense of danger.

Despite the other testimonies, Bunty remains centre stage throughout the book, and her diary entries are a unique insight into one young woman's war. Bunty claims in the foreword, "When I read it now I can't help but think how foolish I sounded." Nevertheless, Bunty's self-deprecation does her entries a disservice. Walter Scott once wrote that a diary is "dull to the contemporary who reads it and invaluable to the student, centuries afterwards, who treasures it." Duncan Leatherdale himself rightly became "engrossed" by his grandmother's words and has expanded on her story in an engaging style to produce a book that is fittingly accessible to a teenage audience.

**"THE BLITZ REMAINS ONE OF THE MOST EVOCATIVE SYMBOLS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM'S STRUGGLE"**



**Above:** Devastation in London. The bombing affected people of all ages, but teenagers in the Blitz have often been overlooked





# CHINESE HORDES AND HUMAN WAVES

## A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE KOREAN WAR 1950-1953

**Author:** Brian Parritt **Publisher:** Pen & Sword Military  
**Price:** £12.99 (Paperback) **Released:** Out now

THIS UNIQUE BOOK IS BOTH AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF FIGHTING AT THE BATTLE OF THE HOOK AND AN ARTICULATE HISTORY THAT INTELLIGENTLY ANALYSES THIS IMPORTANT CONFLICT

In 2018 the nuclear threat from North Korea has never been more acute and a previously neglected conflict has now become highly relevant. Although the Korean War ended almost 65 years ago, in July 1953, a peace treaty was never signed and most of today's geopolitical problems around the Korean Peninsula stem from its outcome.

An American-led United Nations force successfully liberated South Korea, with Britain providing the second highest number of troops. However, the memory of the war has been unusually neglected in the UK, but as Brian Parritt's fascinating and intelligent account shows, British soldiers fought extremely bravely and made many sacrifices.

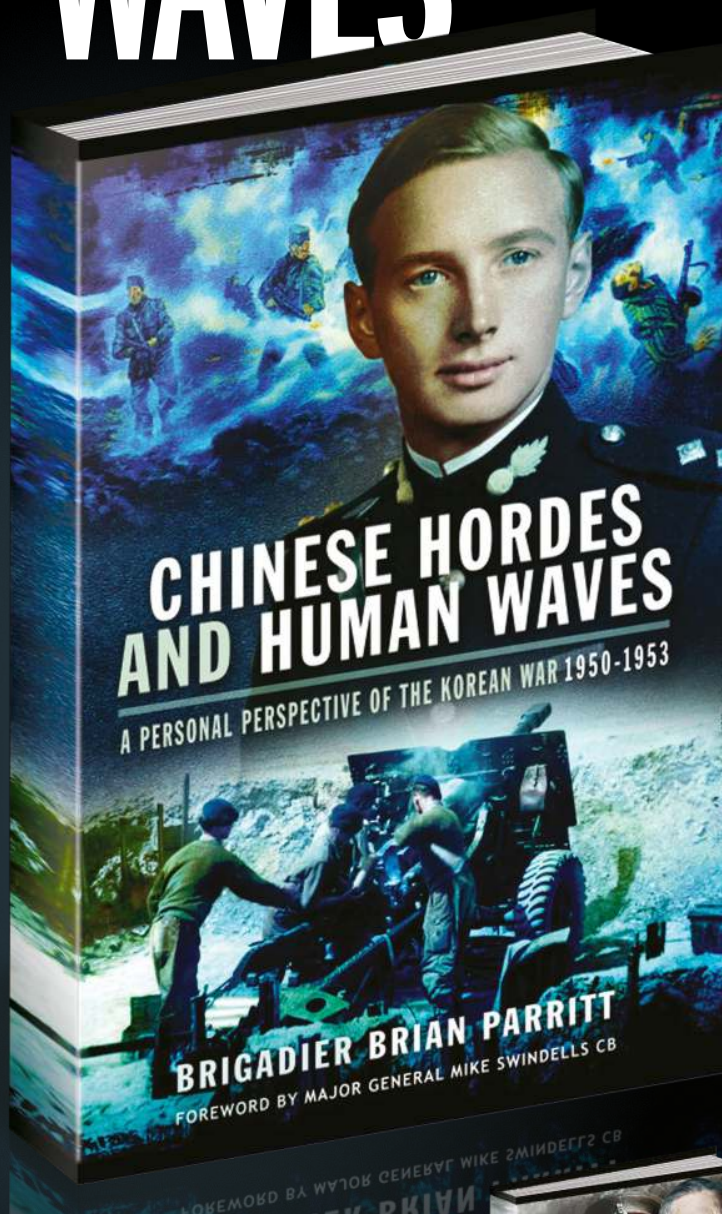
Parritt served in Korea as a second lieutenant in the Royal Artillery and fought at the Battle of the Hook, where he was wounded. He later went on to become a senior intelligence officer before becoming a military historian. *Chinese Hordes and Human Waves* is an autobiographical account of his time in Korea, but it is also a detailed examination into the broader issues surrounding the conflict.

This includes a detailed analysis of intelligence failures during the war, which influenced how he chose the title. Parritt explained to *History of War*, "The intelligence in Korea was appalling to begin with. An American journalist asked what the strength of the Chinese was and the reply was that there were 'hordes' and 'waves' of them. The journalist, who had been through World War II, then asked, "How many divisions are there in a 'horde'?" It was terrible intelligence and a misappreciation because of the perception that there were 'hordes' of men coming."

It is this kind of considered analysis that stands Parritt's book out among war memoirs. Most will include an introductory chapter that focuses on the context for a particular personal story but, in *Chinese Hordes and Human Waves*, Parritt's own war experiences only make up the first part of the book. The other two sections are devoted entirely to a general history of the war, its causes, outcomes and lessons.

For a historian, this structure means that the book is a unique resource that is well researched, intelligent and thoughtful. However, the most crucial aspect is that it was written from the perspective of someone who experienced the intensity of the Korean War. Parritt could have easily made the book entirely about himself, and it would have been a gripping read on its own. His own story is a fascinating insight into static fighting conditions that he reveals were similar to World War I, and he modestly downplays his own role to highlight the bravery of the men he fought with in 'Baker Troop'.

Nevertheless, the author skilfully uses his own experiences to create a unique secondary history that is also a primary source. Such combinations in historical studies are valuable and therefore make for essential reading. Parritt's book is an excellent introduction to a complex war that is both personal and informative in equal measure.



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### THE INTELLIGENCERS BRITISH MILITARY INTELLIGENCE FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO 1929 BRIAN PARRITT

Brian Parritt is also the author of *The Intelligencers: British Military Intelligence From The Middle Ages To 1929*, which uncovers the development of an often overlooked but vital corps in the British Army. For more information visit: [www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk)





# THE SULTANS

Author: Jem Duducu Publisher: Amberley Publishing Price: £20

JEM DUDUCU EXPLORES AN OVERLOOKED EMPIRE THAT LASTED FOR CENTURIES THROUGH THE LIVES OF THE DYNASTY OF OTTOMAN SULTANS

It is nothing short of astonishing that more than four decades have elapsed since the appearance of the last major history of the Ottoman Empire, especially given the ongoing turmoil sweeping the Muslim world and its impact on Christian countries. Jem Duducu has filled the gap with a thoroughly researched and readable account of a dynasty that ruled great swathes of Islamic territory for more than six centuries – longer than any Western empire. “At its peak, the Black Sea and the Red Sea were Ottoman lakes,” the author points out, “and virtually the entire North African coast owed allegiance to the sultan”.

**“DUDUCU FOCUSES ON THE LIVES OF THE SULTANS THEMSELVES, PRESENTING COURT INTRIGUE, WARS AND PLOTS AGAINST A BACKDROP OF EXPANDING POWER AND WEALTH”**



This vast state was created in the 14th-16th centuries by Ottoman, or Osmanli, Turks, who ruled until its dissolution in 1918 by the descendants of Osman I. The author cites the date 1922, when Atatürk abolished the sultanate, though the title of caliph lasted for a further year. Be that as it may, there is no arguing that it was the greatest of the Muslim states and modern Turkey formed only part of the empire, though the terms Turkey and Ottoman Empire are routinely spoken of in the same breath.

The Ottoman state emerged in parts of Asia Minor after the breakdown of the empire of the Seljuk Turks. By the early 16th century, the empire was in the middle stages of its expansion and, being near to Europe, even in those early times was feared as a threat to Christendom. But it is in the modern Islamic cultural and military conflict with the West that this book acquires its relevance to the modern reader. One chief difference in this confrontation is that the greatest Muslim challenge to early modern Europe lay with the Ottoman Turks, a people we now like to think of as entrenched in our camp, as opposed to the enemy's camp.

Even in defeat, the Ottomans displayed a remarkable ‘bounceability’ and fanatical determination to prevail. Take for instance the crucial naval engagement of Lepanto, fought in 1571 between the fleet of the Holy League and the Turkish armada. The battle was decisive in that a Turkish victory would have left the Ottoman Empire supreme in the Mediterranean. It did not, however, affect Turkish hegemony on the land, and even as the Christian commander John of Austria and Pope Pius V celebrated their triumph, a new Turkish fleet was speedily being assembled by Selim II.

Duducu focuses on the lives of the Sultans themselves, presenting court intrigue, wars and plots against a backdrop of expanding power and wealth. The author charts the rise and fall of the dynasty, from the all but forgotten Sultan Murad IV, who led soldiers into battle, captured Baghdad and banned alcohol (but died young from drink), to famous rulers such as Suleiman the Magnificent.

The author (one of whose ancestors was beheaded on the orders of Sultan Murad IV in the 17th century) writes that a multi-national and linguistic empire is not in itself an exceptional phenomenon. “What is truly distinctive and remarkable is that the name of the empire comes from just one family.” The first and last rulers, separated by more than 600 years, could trace a direct bloodline from one to another. Most remarkable of all is that over all those centuries, the dynasty never died out, was deposed or replaced.

*The sultans of the Ottoman Empire controlled a vast area*



## THE SULTANS

THE RISE AND FALL OF  
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A 600-YEAR HISTORY

JEM DUDUCU





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Senior Designer **Curtis Fermor-Dunman**

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Senior Art Editor **Duncan Crook**

## Contributors

Glenn Fisher, Mike Haskew, Robin Horsfall, Mark Simner, Marc DeSantis, Jules Stewart, Alex Zakrzewski, William Philpott

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## Advertising

Media packs are available on request

Commercial Director **Clare Dove**

clare.dove@futurenet.com

Regional Advertising Director **Mark Wright**

mark.wright@futurenet.com

Advertising Manager **Samantha Novata**

samantha.novata@futurenet.com

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# WWII

## RED CROSS PARCEL

Millions of these charitable packages were distributed to Allied POWs from Britain and were a constant, life-saving reminder that their home countries had not forgotten the captured soldiers



**"THESE PACKAGES WERE AN ESSENTIAL LIFELINE FOR THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF POWS, PARTICULARLY WHEN THEIR AXIS CAPTORS OFTEN DELIBERATELY NEGLECTED TO FEED THEM PROPERLY"**

*Left: Red Cross parcels usually contained food, but there were also specialised packages that contained medical supplies, practical equipment and entertainment, such as games*

**B**etween 1939-45 the British Red Cross sent out 20 million food parcels to British and Commonwealth prisoners of war. These packages were an essential lifeline for the physical and mental health of POWs, particularly when their Axis captors often deliberately neglected to feed them properly.

The Red Cross worked with the Order of St John under the auspices of the Joint War Organisation (JWO) in 17 British centres to assemble the parcels. The centres were entirely staffed by volunteers, and 163,000 parcels were packed every week for shipment. The JWO had eight ships under permanent contract that shuttled between Lisbon and Marseilles before the parcels travelled by rail to Geneva under the supervision of the International Red Cross Committee. The Committee would then distribute the parcels to Axis prison camps.

Each parcel weighed five kilograms (11 pounds) and was usually sent at a rate of one man per week. The enclosed food was mainly tinned and was chosen to provide a range of essential nutrients. A typical parcel would contain tinned vegetables, fish, meat and



*Red Cross volunteers pack parcels for POWs c.1942-43. 163,000 parcels could be packed every week in 17 centres across Britain*

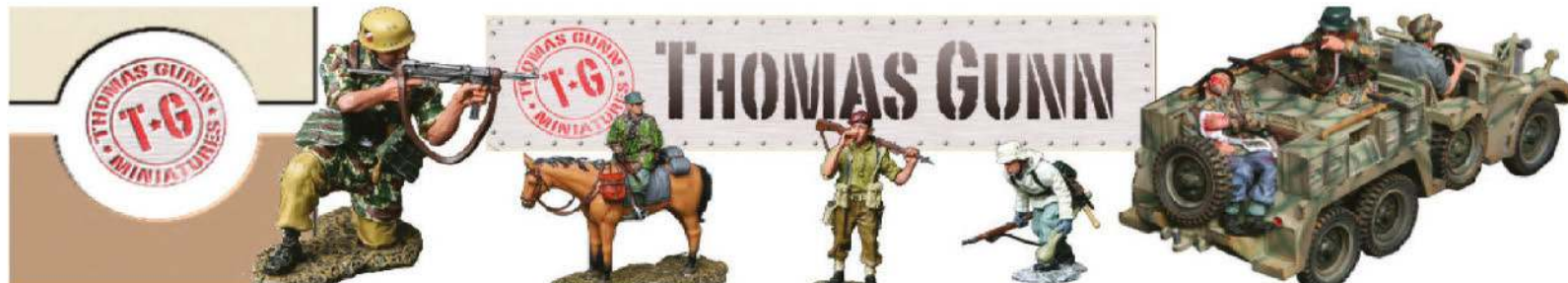
sugar, as well as soap and packets of tea and chocolate. The Ministry of Food also provided a camp cookery book, and there were instructions on how to make useful objects from empty tins.

Each POW also received a quarterly 'next of kin' parcel that contained practical items such as clothes, sewing equipment, razor blades and toothbrushes. 'Invalid' parcels would contain medical supplies, books and games while Indian POWs would receive specially identified parcels

that contained tinned atta flour, curry powder and rice.

One of the most appreciated packages was a special Christmas parcel between 1940-44, which contained a Christmas card and tinned festive delicacies. In 1944 each POW would have been able to assemble a rudimentary Christmas dinner that included tinned Christmas cake and pudding, pork, stuffing and stewed steak, packets of chocolate and pancake batter.





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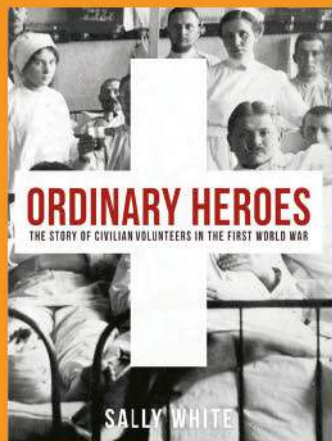
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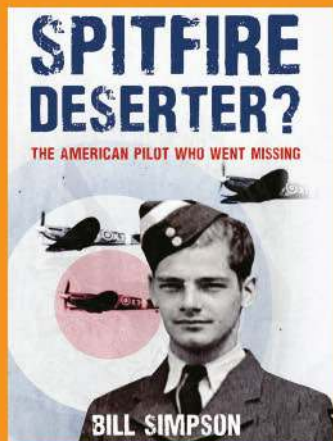
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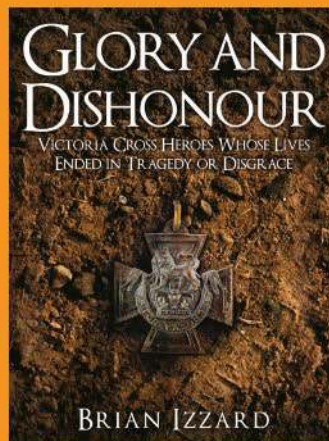
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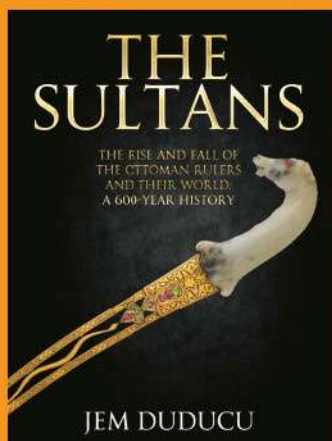
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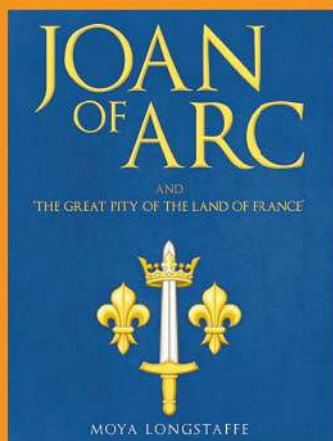
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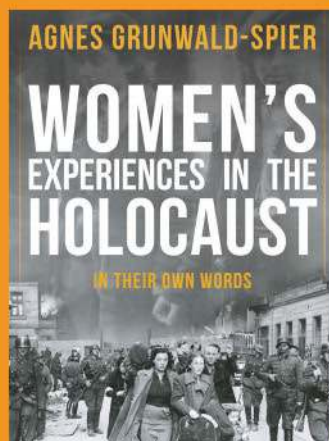
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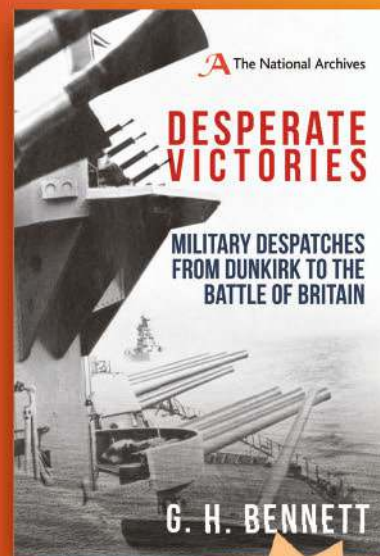
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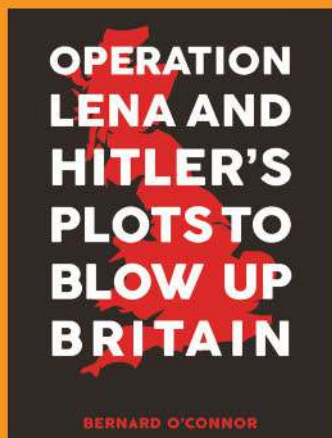


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